Vol.2 Issue 3 | MARCH 2019

ARANYA

HYDERABAD BIRDING PALS | FRIENDS OF FLORA & FAUNA

Photography

Editors
Gopalakrishna R
Phani Krishna Ravi
Sriram Reddy
Kalyan Ineni

Proofing
Husein Latif
Suren Akkaraju
Ashis Kumar Pradhan

Content Team
Bhaarat Vyas
Mohit Joshi
Shashi Kotte
Hari Adepu
Manoj Kumar Vittapu
Ajinkya Supekar

Cover Image
Pale Capped Pigeon
By Anil Kumar Thoom

Back Cover Image
Great Crested Grebe
By Sriram Reddy
Images used are copyright of photographers

Hyderabad Birding Pals

For Feedback and Contributions, Contact us

AranyA@hyderabadbirdingpals.com
www.hyderabadbirdingpals.com
@hydbirdingpals
HyderabadBirdingPals

In this issue

Aranya welcomes you to flip through the pages of the March Issue. This edition brings to you the birding results of the Big Bird Day-2019 for Telangana. The Sunday birders glimpsed the returning migratory birds during the birdwalks. The importance of listening to the bird calls has been showcased in this issue. Hyderabad Birding Pals conducted the 250th bird walk at Maredumilli giving a report of spectacular sightings of the birds of the Eastern Ghats. Manoj Kumar Vittapu shares the secrets in his camera bag. Please feel free to contribute your experiences and articles with us at the email address given at the bottom of this page.Your feedback is important to us.

We hope to continue amplifying your spark of interest in birds and bird watching. We wish that this issue gathers your interest to go through the pages as well as to inspire you to explore more. Stay hydrated while exploring as the summer is back. Fly high!!!

Happy Birding
Gopalakrishna R

Hyderabad Birding Pals (HBP) is a group of bird watching enthusiasts based out of Hyderabad, united by a common love for birds. We organize free bird walks around the city of Hyderabad that are open to participation by all like-minded individuals. We are an informal group, who are passionate about bird watching and photography, learning about bird behavior (in the field) and doing our bit towards conservation of nature and its habitat as well. Do check our Facebook group to stay up to date on our bird watching events.

ARANYA

CONTENTS

Page

Bird Walks
4

Trip Reports 10

Sighting of the Black Eagle 29

Listening to the Birds 32

Big Bird Day 2019 in a Capsule 37

What's in my Camera Bag 40

Notable Sightings 45

Photographer's Corner 59

249th Bird Walk | Big Bird Day
Team ‘Yellow throated bulbul”- Uma maheshwaram
3 rd February, 2019

256th Bird Walk | Big Bird Day
Team ‘Streak throated Woodpecker”- Kawal Tiger reserve
3 rd February, 2019

251st Bird Walk | Big Bird Day
Team ‘Mottled Wood Owl”- Ananthagiri Hills
3 rd February, 2019

252nd Bird Walk | Big Bird Day
Team ‘Red necked Falcon”- Manjeera reservoir and Anna Sagar
3 rd February, 2019

253rd Bird Walk | Big Bird Day
Team 'Rosefinch"- Narasapur and Pocharam
3 rd February, 2019

254th Bird Walk | Big Bird Day
Team 'Spot billed Pelican"- ICRISAT campus and Ameenpur
3 rd February, 2019

VISITOR
239
ICRISAT

255th Bird Walk | Big Bird Day
Team ‘Strawberry Finch”- Edulabad lake
3 rd February, 2019

250th Bird Walk | Maredumilli, Andhra Pradesh
8th -10th February, 2019

257th Bird Walk | Big Bird Day
Team 'Dusky Eagle Owl"- Pakhal lake
3rd February, 2019

259th Bird Walk | Big Bird Day
Team 'Kestrel"- Osman Sagar and Himayath Sagar
3rd February, 2019

AMRABAD TIGER RESERVE
MALLELA THEERTHAM WATER FALLS
PARKING AREA
మల్లెల తీర్థం జలపాతము

260th Bird Walk | Mallelatheertham
17th February, 2019

261th Bird Walk | Anathagiri Hills
24rd February, 2019

Uma Maheshwaram - Team Yellow-Throated Bulbul

Manoj Kumar Vittapu & Suharsha Baskarla

It was just a week before Big Bird Day- Feb 3rd 2019, when I got call from HBP Admin team asking me to lead a team at Nallamala Forest for the BBD event. I was a bit surprised at first, but was happy to lead the team, as it is my favorite place of birding. I immediately said that “I am IN”. Since I am a member of the Big Bird Day 2018 winning team after spotting 200+ birds, it was a not only a challenge for me to sustain this record but also a challenger for Team- Yellow Throated Bulbul. Big Bird Day is not like any other birding day, as it is thoroughly competitive. I had to plan for this event in 3 stages 1) Building a strong team 2) Gathering information about the places that need to visit 3) Spotting as many birds as we can by visiting places surrounding Nallamala by splitting into sub-teams.

1) Building a strong team: I started advertising for members of my team, but no one responded first. I was bit a disappointed but there was a pleasant surprise waiting for me. Abhishek Ravindra, Raghu Nathan, Abrar showed their interest to join my team. I was quite happy that these 3 wonderful birders were joining me. I was with Abhishek, who is one of the young top birder in India, on my first bird walk and Big Bird Day 2017. Raghu and Abrar are equally wonderful birders . One of HBP’s best birder and wildlife photographer, Mangeshsingh Thakur, joined the team. Next my dearest friend Harish Kothari joined along with Shreeniwas Kandukuree. Both are pretty good bird photographers too. But the numbers were not enough, as I have to cover around 150 kms area and each area will take around 2-3 hours to reach and observe the species. There was another surprise for me in that two Forest Department Girl Students, Suharsha and Pooja, approached me and showed interested in joining my team. I was in a dilemma whether to accept the request, as we have to travel in core-tiger zones. I was unsure of their bird spotting capabilities as well as their energy levels as I never met them before. But they proved that they are as capable as us. Manjoy Lourembam another fantastic wildlife photographer joined the team. Last but not the least, Master Chetan Sai Ineni S/o Mr. Kalyan Ineni, whom we fondly call as little Saleem Ali from Hyderabad, joined the team sans his father. The team was set just a day before Big Bird Day and I was very happy with the team count and their abilities.

Picture: Mohit Joshi- Yellow throated Bulbul

2) Gathering information about the places that need to visit: Nallamala forest (distributed in both Andhra Pradesh and Telangana states) is one of the biggest tiger reserves in Asia. This is full of Wildlife, Flora & Fauna and usually, springs many surprises. Heavy winds and rains changes the habitat here, so I contacted Forest Department Beat Officer and Watchers at Rhushula Cheruvu to understand the situation. They provided an update that they recently planted plenty fruit trees around the lake and that it rained for couple of days. On the other side, Abhishek and Raghu Nathan visited different places to understand the habitats and birds activity. There was a bad news as well that all small lakes and ponds have dried up. Overall, we learnt that it is going to be surprise trip for us as the habitats don't look promising.

3) Spotting as many birds as we can by visiting places surrounding Nallamala by splitting into sub-teams: Finally, the Big Bird Day was upon us. New members were excited and others went on with their business quietly.

Picture: Suneel Edamadaka- Loten's Sunbird

Fareed Mohmed

Picture: Fareed Mohammed- Blue Rock thrush

On 3rd Feb 2019, at around 5:30 AM, all the 11 team members reached Uma-Maheshwaram in 3 cars. We discussed about the places that could be visited, and the sub-teams and its members. After that, we took a group picture and geared up with cameras. At 6:00 AM exactly, we started on our first phase of birding @Uma-Maheshwaram, where managed to spot Brown Boobook (*Ninox scutulata*), Indian Scops Owl (*Otus bakkamoena*), Black-hooded Oriole (*Oriolus kundoo*), Coppersmith Barbet (*Psilopogon haemacephalus*) etc., Later we separated into 2 teams - Team A consisting of Manoj, Harish, Mangesh, Shreeniwas, Pooja and Chetan and Team B consisting of Abhishek, Raghu Nathan, Abrar, Manjoy and Suharsha. Abhishek and I were the leaders of Team B and Team A respectively.

We started from Uma Maheshwaram and covered couple of lakes on the way to Achampet. After completing breakfast, we reached Rushulacheruvu Base Camp of Forest Department around 8:30 AM. We placed a request with the Forest Department beforehand for a forest watcher and we met up with our watcher at the Base Camp. Mangesh spotted Green-Imperial Pigeon (*Ducula aenea*) the moment we reached our first location. We took some pictures and continued walking through the forest. After 100m, we spotted a female leopard and her cub's pugmarks. With my previous experience of that location, I learnt that this area is an active leopard zone, we took some pictures of those pug marks and moved towards the lake. Due to heavy winds and drizzle, the area looked bit messy, but we observed that there is pretty good bird activity. We had interesting sightings of White-rumped Shama (*Copsychus malabaricus*), Blue-throated Flycatcher (*Cyornis rubeculoides*), Crested Serpent-Eagle (*Spilornis cheela*), Crested Hawk-Eagle (*Nisaetus cirrhatus*), Indian Spotted Eagle (*Clanga hastata*), Yellow-footed Pigeon (*Treron phoenicopterus*), Jungle Owlet (*Glaucidium radiatum*), Crested Honey-buzzard (*Pernis ptilorhynchus*), Indian Yellow Tit (*Machlolophus aplonotus*), Indian Paradise Flycatcher (*Terpsiphone paradisi*) etc. Till noon, we roamed around the lake and forest and took a note of all the birds we spotted. After having a quick lunch, we headed back to Uma-Maheshwaram and took photographs of birds by spending 2-3 hours around the reservoir and looked around for waders and other water birds till 6:00 PM. Team B also reached Dindi Reservoir around 5:00 PM but they were other side of the lake. Enjoyed beautiful sunset at reservoir and around 6:45 PM and headed back to Hyderabad.

Big Bird Day – 2019 (Team B trip report) by Suharsha Bhaskarala

Big bird day 2019 was organised by Hyderabad birding pals on 2nd Feb. It was my 1st big bird day and I was filled with excitement and enthusiasm. Everyone started from Hyderabad by 3 in the morning to their planned birding spots. As a part of it, 11 members from HBP chose to do birding at Uma Maheshwaram & surrounding places. Our team was split into two groups, of which one group headed by Mr.Manoj covered Rushula cheruvu & Dindi reservoir. And other group headed by Mr.Abhishek covered Uma Maheshwaram, Amrabad Tiger Reserve, Mallela Theertham & Dindi.

According to the plan, we reached Uma Maheshwaram by 6:00AM & started birding. Some of the birds I was hoping to see during my time in Nallamala forest was the Brown Boobook and Indian Scops Owl.

Picture: Sourav Das - Black headed Oriole

As I wished, the 1st bird that we spotted was Brown Boobook and later, we even spotted Indian Scops Owl by hearing its calls. Both the birds are lifers for me. From there we reached the temple and spotted colorful birds like Painted Spurfowl (*Galloperdix lunulata*), Blue Rock Thrush (*Monticola solitarius*), Yellow-throated Bulbul (*Pycnonotus xantholaemus)*, Crested Hawk Eagle, Indian Blackbird (*Turdus simillimus*) etc. This place was full of activity with number of dove & pigeon species like Spotted Dove (*Streptopelia chinensis*), Collared Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*), Asian Emerald Dove (*Chalcophaps indica)*, Laughing Dove (*Streptopelia senegalensis)*, Yellow-footed Pigeon, Green and Imperial Pigeon. Some other birds present here are drongos, woodpeckers, flowerpeckers, babblers, sunbirds, warblers etc. In the whole day of birding what attracted me most is the flight of Crested Hawk Eagle and later it perched on a tree, which allowed us to take photographs. From there, we moved to Amarbad Tiger Reserve, as we got permission from PCCF, Mr.P.K.Jha to do birding over there.

Picture: Santanu Majumder - Painted Spurfowl

Picture: Suman Battacharjee - Golden fronted leafbird

As it is sunny, hot day there was not much activity, so we were not able to spot many birds. We even covered a small pond which is present adjacent to a mouse deer centre, but without any luck. We spotted some water birds like Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta)*, India Pond Heron (*Ardeola grayii)* & Common Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis)*. On our way to Mallela Theertham we spotted Indian Scops Owl, Jungle Owlet by hearing their calls. We narrowly avoided hitting a pair of Barred Buttonquail (*Turnix suscitator*) and Jungle Bush-quail (*Perdicula asiatica),*which crossed our car. We reached Mallela Theertham by 1PM and started birding inside the forest. As the forest patch has lush green foliage and some patch with shrubby vegetation, there was a lot of bird activity over there. The advantage of this place for birds is, there are

Picture: M Srinivas - Grey junglefowl

water falls and water patches present at some intervals adjacent to forest. We spotted some of the colourful birds like Ultramarine Flycatcher (*Ficedula superciliaris*), Verditer Flycatcher (*Eumyias thalassinus*), Indian Paradise-Flycatcher (*Terpsiphone paradisi*), Taiga Flycatcher (*Ficedula albicilla*), Red-breasted Flycatcher (*Ficedula parva*), Yellow-eyed Babbler (*Chrysomma sinense*), Oriental White-eye (*Zosterops palpebrosus*), Grey-headed Canary flycatcher, Cinereous Tit (*Parus cinereus*) etc. This place has population of different species of warblers like Booted Warbler (*Iduna caligata*), Sulphur-bellied Warbler (*Phylloscopus griseolus*), Blyth's Reed Warbler (*Acrocephalus dumetorum*), Clamorous Reed Warbler (*Acrocephalus stentoreus*), Green Warbler (*Phylloscopus nitidus*) and Greenish Warbler (*Phylloscopus trochiloides*) etc. The last place we covered is Dindi reservoir. It had deceit of Red-wattled (*Vanellus indicus*) & Yellow-wattled (*Vanellus malabaricus*) lapwings, gulp of cormorants, colony of ibises, bevy of larks, wisp of common snipes & pipits, congregation of plovers & fling of sandpipers.

The other bird species we could spot are Common Greenshank (*Tringa nebularia*), Little Stint (*Calidris minuta*), colony of gulls, Common Woodshrike (*Tephrodornis pondicerianus*), Eurasian Hoopoe (*Upupa epops*), Common Coot (*Fulica atra*), White-breasted Waterhen (*Amaurornis phoenicurus*), Lesser Whistling Duck (*Dendrocygna javanica*), Indian Spot-billed Duck (*Anas poecilorhyncha*) etc.

Thus the day ended with great experience and beautiful moments and unexpected sightings of some of the rare birds.

Picture: Raghavarao Suryadevara - Black Eagle

Edulabad lake Birding

Sourav Das

It was my first Big-Bird Day involvement. My team was named Strawberry Finch and i was in charge of hotspot Edulabad Lake which is located near Ghatkesar. It is a big clean lake much far from the city area. But i was quite unlucky to have no members in my team for the day. That does not reduced my enthusiasm, rather more excited how i will do my first whole day birding alone.

My day started at 5 in the morning. 6:15 i was near the lake. Had a glance all around. It was fog everywhere, till 6:40 when the visibility was good. i parked my bike and started exploring the regular areas. After checking for more than an hour i just got the commoners.

So i decided to check few areas which i have not visited before. There's when my real birding surprises started. i have been to this place for more than 10 times but for the first time ever i witnessed migratory ducks in plenty. The first one i sighted was a pair of common pochard. Few mts away were few northern shoveler. i decided to search a different patch before exploring more on the lake area. The fields near by were filled with commoners like the purple herons, grey heron, egrets, red wattled lapwing etc. Suddenly i heard lot of chirpings of small birds. when i entered the area, it was full of warblers and other birds. plenty of blyth reed warbler, booted warbler, sykes warbler and the biggest warbler Clamorous reed warbler.Along with that were the ashy prinia, plain prinia, white-browed bulbul.

Picture: Hari Adepu - Red Avadavat

To my surprise were the lesser white throat, 2 tree pipits and 4 spotted owlets flying from one spot which was a very good scene to watch. Common tailor bird, common iora and indian golden oriole activities was also good in that area. spend more than 1 hour there.

On the lake bund there were red-rumped swallows, barn swallows more than 100 and also the wire-tailed swallows were spotted in few numbers. Indian roller, common hawk cuckoo, black kites and 2 resident pied kingfisher were seen near the lake.

I finally moved towards the lake area. Lot of baya weavers were chirping in the bushes along with few zitting cisticola. Saw one Brown shrike and long tailed shrike in a usual location where i regularly found them. To my surprise there were only few red avadavat far away and no tricoloured munias who usually fill the area. At lake bed i saw one siberain stonechat female, little ringed plover, painted strokes, more than 50 asian openbill strokes flying and wading near

Picture: V Krishnan - Indian grey hornbill

the lakebed. Wood sandpiper, marsh sandpiper, common sandpiper and green sandpiper were seen in few numbers. Saw a single oriental darter, few whiskered tern and few more river terns. I marched forward more deep where human activities was less. Again to my surprise saw a glimpse of ruddy breasted crake, a common snipe on the nest who was feeling vulnerable when i was approaching. so just took record shot and moved on. There were plenty of glossy ibis and black headed ibis. Along with them was the most unexpected scene i saw that day. Lesser whistling ducks, garganeys, northern shoveler and indian spot-billed ducks and little grebe all more than 50 were on the lake bed. It was a very good record for edulabad lake. Near by were the asian palm swift and little swift flying in few nos. saw one grey bellied cuckoo near the paddy field. Commoners like the eurasian coot,eurasian moorhen, few pipits and common hoopoe were also near the lake.

At 2pm i decided to leave for Osmania and i reached at 2:40. Mostly the birding area we prefer is the back side area of Genetics block and a small water patch which is a good place for small birds. i think that day was a lucky day for me. I just took some 20 steps after parking my bike where i was welcomed by 2 Hair-crested drongo on my front tree, one asian paradise flycatcher full morph on my left and a tickell's blue flycatcher on my right. This was exactly what happened to me and i was confused whose pic to take first. I took my time and took record shot of all.

Moving forward i saw few greenish warbler, rufous treepie, large gray babbler. I moved to a diff location where i saw 2 spotted owlets, one asian brown flycatcher and one taiga flycatcher as well. Adding to the surprise there was one more hair crested drongo being chased by a bird which i was unable to identify. it looked more like a large cuckooshrike but i was not sure. so i approached the bird slowly for more than 300 mts and finally took few record shots. Later confirmed that it was the rare black-winged cuckooshrike. spend few more time till 4:30 when the sun was coming down and the area was getting dark. i returned back to my home with a great full-day birding and many surprises from 2 very familiar locations where expectations are always not that high for regular birders like me.

So it concluded that any place at any time can give you surprises and something more than you expect. I was happy to contribute 2 species to the total count for the Big Bird Day, which i was not expecting at all when the day started.

Pakhal Lake- Team Dusky Eagle Owl

Harikrishna Adepu

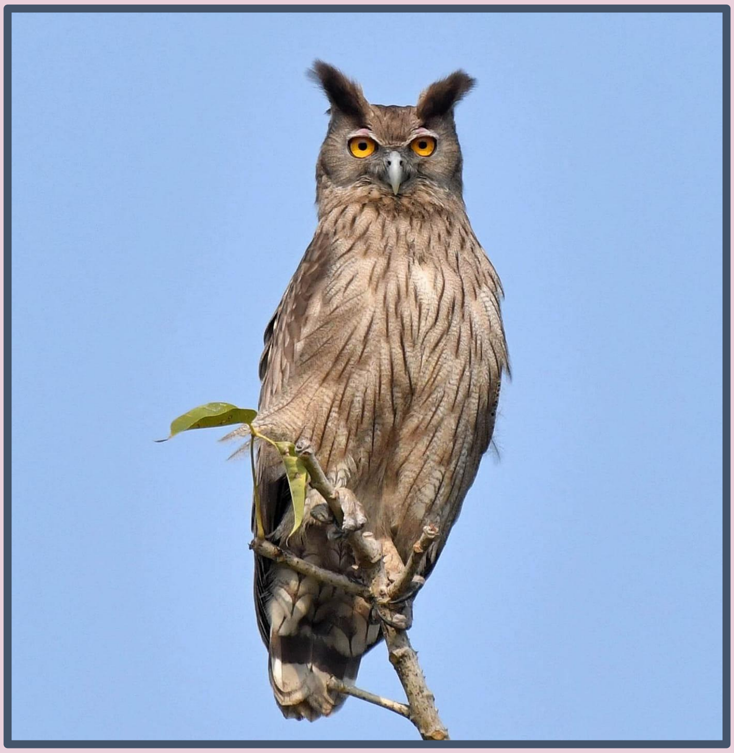
The Pakhal Wildlife Sanctuary is a striking manmade lake, which was completed in the 1213 AD by the royal Kakatiyas. This beguiling sanctuary is spread over an area of 860 square kilometers. The place gets more interesting as this amazing plateau region is surrounded by a mesmerizing range of low hills. The environment of the sanctuary and the Pakhal Lake as an add-on form the most stunning sight ever. The flora consists of mixed forests, bamboo and teak forests.

Black Redstart (Phoenicurus ochruros)
Picture:

We reached the Sanctuary by 7AM, all set for the Big Bird Day. We started Birding immediately, with a target to record as many species as possible. We headed towards the lake, when a Black-naped Monarch was perched in front of, as if it wanted to say a quick hello to us before it flew away. We continued to walk ahead, spotting and recording birds, which were mostly the commoners. Then we saw the Greater Racket-tailed Drongo perched on a tree top, giving us a glimpse of record shot before it went deep into the thick foliage, thus giving us a good start. We walked towards the other side of the lake, lead by Munna, expecting to see the new visitor to that area, the Grey-Headed Fish Eagle. While we glued our eyes on to the treetops, we suddenly saw a flock of Snipes taking off from right in front of us. We managed to get a few record shots, and the result was surprising, as it was a group of Common Snipes, with a few Pin-Tailed Snipes among them.

Chestnut Headed Bee Eater (Merops leschenaulti)
Picture:

As we continued further, when suddenly Munna spotted a raptor flying head-on to us, and, there it was, the Grey-Headed Fish Eagle. The area was full of life, with a lot of Prinias, Warblers, Larks and Pipits hopping around. A couple of hours after spending there, we headed to the other part of the Sanctuary. We were greeted by the Common Kingfisher, followed by a Black Redstart, a couple of Spotted Owlets and other commoners. We wrapped up at that place early and headed towards the other side of the lake.



Dusky Eagle Owl (Bubo coromandus)
Picture:

As we continued towards the lake, we spotted a few ducks. Hoping to get some surprises, we slowly walked ahead, when the Red-Crested Pochards took off into the air. Then there were the Lesser Whistling Ducks, and then, what we saw was an out of the world scene. Hundreds of Northern Pintails, Common Pochards, Red-Crested Pochards, Norther Shovelers and Godwits floating around on the waters. It was an amazing sight. We spent a couple of hours there, and headed towards another spot, for the Prized Catch of the day, the Dusky Eagle Owl. We slowly ventured into the area, being lead by Munna all the way, and, lo....there it was, not one, but two Dusky Eagle Owls, with one of them giving us some great shots before flying off. It was staring at us, as if it was trying to ask: “Guys...how many pics will you click?” ;).

It was around 2:30PM, when we decided to call it a day at Pakhal and left for Keshavapur Lake, another wonderful place, suggested by Dr. Jagan Pannala sir. We were surprised when we reached the spot, which was filled with thousands of ducks, flying and floating around the lake. We were delighted to see the Tufted Duck there, followed by other ducks and waders.

Lesser Whistling Ducks (Dendrocygna javanica)
Picture:

It was 5:30PM when we decided to call it a day and head back to hyderabad. We had a great day Birding with 120+ species quite with the specialities being: Dusky Eagle Owl, Chestnut-Headed Bee-Eater, Grey-Headed Fish Eagle, Pin-Tailed Snipe, Verditer Flycatcher, Black-naped Monarch, Greater Racket-Tailed Drongo, Jungle Owlet, Common Kestrel etc.,.

Oriental White Eye (Zosterops palpebrosus)
Picture: Satish Sasi

HBP250: Maredumilli

Shashi Kotte and Harikrishna Adepu

The 250th bird walk conducted by Hyderabad Birding Pals(HBP) was planned at Maredumilli, East Godavari District of Andhra Pradesh. HBP as a practice conducts every 50th Bird walk at an exotic place and the bird walk is conducted for a minimum of 2 days. The planning for the same started in the first week of January 2019. The admin team has put in a great effort in coordination with the participants. Booking the hotel arranging food and helping individuals car-pool.

The Bird Walk was supposed to start on Friday 8th Feb 2019, but few enthusiastic birders started the journey a day before. It was decided and established that the team would gather at Haritha, Bhadrachalam at 6 AM and start the journey to Maredumilli. As decided all the participants gathered at Haritha. After the customary group photo and a fulfilling breakfast, we all started to Maredumilli.

As we crossed Chinturu check-post suddenly all the cars stopped and the members disembarked the car with there cameras and started running. It was the first sight of a raptor on the tour, a Crested Serpent Eagle perched on a tree top for a Sunbath. The bird was the most photographed raptor of the trip.

Picture: Venkatesh VT - Red Jungle Fowl

Anil Thoom Photography

Picture: Anil Kumar Thoom - Green Billed Malkoha

As we continued the journey we came to a Y junction where we stopped to guide the first-timers. The one on the left takes you to Sileru, as we waited for all the cars to assemble.

Few of the birds got down to explore the area, Chestnut-shouldered Petronia (*Gymnornis xanthocollis*), Flamebacks,

Picture: Harikrishna Adepu - Pale capped Pigeon

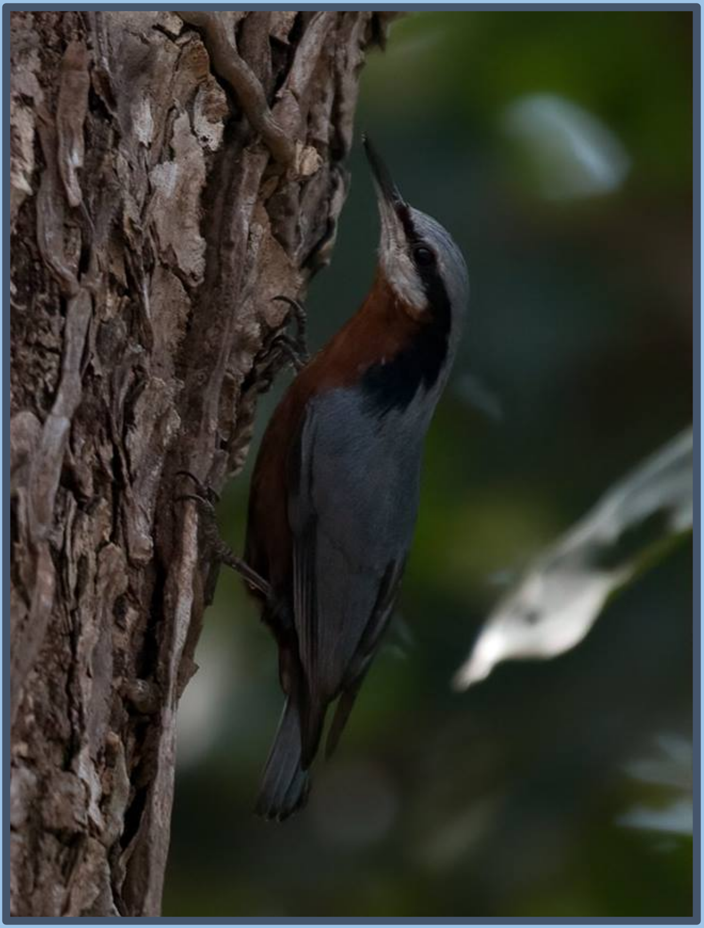
Streak-throated Woodpecker (*Picus xanthopygaeus*) and Barbets were photographed. After a brief wait, as all the vehicles assembled we started the journey towards Maredumilli. There are two viewpoints built by the AP government, where a few members stopped to take landscapes and profile pictures.

The team of Hari(Hari, Rajeev, Alnoor and Shashi) went ahead and stopped at the second viewpoint. They got down to see if there were any raptors around. Suddenly Alnoor spotted a small green bird flitting around and the team ran behind the bird and started photographing it. After a few shots, Hari observed the bird was an Oriental White-eye (*Zosterops palpebrosus*) with an orange-red patch on the bird's throat and head. Everyone was excited to ID the bird. Later it was confirmed that the bird was an Orient White-eye with pollen on it. And then as if to treat us a Black Eagle (*Ictinaetus malaiensis*) flew over us for almost 5 minutes. Some of us got full frame shots.

After the bird left, the team decided that there will be no more stops and we would directly meet at the resort(Bird's Nest). We checked in by 12:30 and had a delicious lunch rested till 2 pm. The other members spotted Malabar Trogon (*Harpactes fasciatus*), Velvet-fronted Nuthatch (*Sitta frontalis*), Scarlet Minivet (*Pericrocotus speciosus*), Green Imperial-Pigeon (*Ducula aenea*) among other birds.

The actual birdwalk started at 2, the teams decided to explore various hotspots and the teams were formed accordingly. While some explored the Coffee plantation, others started exploring the Pullangi road. The Pullangi road was bustling with bird activity and we got down to get few shots.

Picture: Shreenivas Kandukuree - Scarlet minivet



Picture: Shashi Kotte - Indian Nuthatch

A Crested Serpent-Eagle (*Spilornis cheela*) came out and sat on an open perch for 5 minutes giving ample time for everyone to get a shot. While others moved ahead, Kalyan and I started exploring a fruit-bearing tree where there was a lot of activity. We were able to spot few birds including Verditer Flycatcher (*Eumyias thalassinus*), Chestnut-tailed Starling (*Sturnia malabarica*), Red-whiskered Bulbul (*Pycnonotus jocosus*), Coppersmith Barbet (*Psilopogon haemacephalus*), Yellow-browed Warbler (*Phylloscopus inornatus*), Ultramarine Flycatcher (*Ficedula superciliaris*), and Large-billed Crow (*Corvus macrorhynchos*).

After spending about 20 minutes we decided to explore the three bridges where Jerdon's Baza (*Aviceda jerdoni*) was spotted earlier. Call it bad luck or divine intervention, the bird activity suddenly stopped and we could hardly spot a bird thereafter, save the Spangled Drongo (*Dicrurus bracteatus*) and Puff-throated Babbler (*Pellorneum ruficeps*). As we decided to call it a day, there was a sudden commotion. M Srinivas spotted 3 Grey Treepies (*Dendrocitta formosae*) perched on a tree at a distance. Due to the fading light, all we could manage were record shots and we headed back to the resort.

Few members visited Rampachodavarm to refuel, pick the local delicacy 'The Bamboo Chicken' or 'Bongu Chicken' as it is known locally and some spirits. The team got together for dinner around 9 PM in the garden where the members shared their birding experiences of the day. After dinner, we all called it a day and the preparation began for the next day.

Picture: Shashi Kotte - Black headed shrike

Picture: M Srinivas - Black crested bulbul

Day 2: The team assembled for a group photo at 6:45 am and the members formed into 3 groups. The plan was to explore more areas and record as many species as possible. One team explored Rampachodavaram waterfalls, the other team explored the Coffee plantation and the third team explored the area near Matha Bhimavaram.

Mr Jimmy Carter Polimati (a local naturalist) joined Hari Adepu's team, there were nearly 16 members in it. This team was exploring Mattam Bhimavaram area. On this route, the team spotted over 10 Crested Serpent-Eagle, a Pale-capped Pigeon (*Columba punicea*) (a lifer for many), and other birds. The drive was an amazing experience of empty roads and green cover on either side of the road.

Mattam Bhimavaram village is located in Koyyuru Tehsil of Visakhapatnam district in Andhra Pradesh, India. It is situated 40km away from sub-district headquarter Koyyuru and 192km away from district headquarter Visakhapatnam. As per 2009 stats, M Bhimavaram is the gram panchayat of Mattam Bhimavaram village. The total geographical area of village is 297 hectares. Mattam Bhimavaram has a total population of 464 people. There are about 92 houses in Mattam Bhimavaram village. Anakapalle is nearest town to Mattam Bhimavaram which is approximately 102 km away.

Mattam Bhimavaram is a place least explored by the birders and is a promising place, providing an opportunity to spot quite a few rarities, such as the Pied Hornbills, Blue-bearded Bee-Eaters, Jerdon’s baza, Green-billed Malkoha and the likes which would be a feast to the eyes of the birders. Inhabited only by the tribals, this place is not disturbed much, providing an ample opportunity for the avi-fauna to thrive and flourish. One can expect to spot about 150+ species if visited in the right season.

Picture: Shashi Kotte - Forest wagtail

Picture: Manoj Kumar Vittapu - Jungle Myna

It was the second day of our 250th Birdwalk at Maredumilli. After contemplating about which is part of the area to visit, since we were more than 35 people, we decided to split into small groups, and cover different parts of the forest. One team along with Jimmy Carter has decided to explore the Mattam Bhimavaram area. We started from our resort at 7AM, and after a quick breakfast on the way, we headed towards our destination in a hope to see the Pied Hornbills. Once we hit the road, just after a couple of kilometers, Jimmy spotted something on a dried tree, a little far away from us. There it was, a Pale Capped Pigeon, perched royally on an open perch. We quickly put our cameras in action, and clicked quite a few good shots. After we were done, we left the place. Our target was to reach Mattam Bhimavaram by 11AM, so that we can get the Hornbills.

As we started heading further, we started scanning the area for the Jerdon’s Baza, but we were unlucky that day. We headed further, scanning the place, for raptors and other birds. After driving a few meters ahead, we spotted a Crested Serpent Eagle, nicely sitting on an open perch. We immediately got down off our cars, put our cameras into action. Slowly we started heading further, seeing a lot of raptors, and all of them being the Crested Serpent Eagles (we saw at least 15 of them that day ;)).

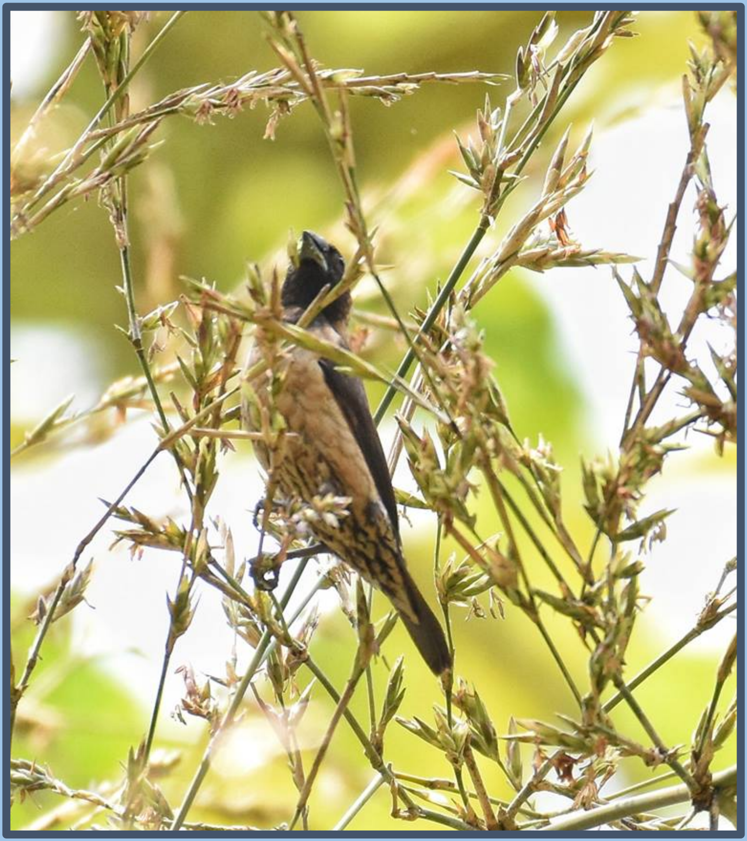
It was a long and lovely drive with lot of bird activity all along the way. We were greeted by the Chestnut Tailed Starlings, Cinereous Tits, Common Kestrel, a lot of Drongos (Black, Ashy & Bronzed). We finally reached Mattam Bhimavaram at 11:30AM, and went searching for the Hornbills. It was an amazing area, with a few tribal hamlets and a promising bird and wildlife activity. Jimmy inquired about the Hornbills with a few locals there and we headed towards the spot as suggested by them. We parked our cars at one place and started walking with our cameras and Binoculars. The walk was a little hectic, but it was great, as we spotted a good number of

Picture: Shashi Kotte - Crested serpent eagle

Picture: Manoj Kumar Vittapu - Pin striped tit babbler

Species, including the Green-billed Malkoha, Blue-bearded Bee-Eater, Indian Yellow Tit, Verditer Flycatcher, Brown-Cheeked Fulvetta and other commoners. We headed back, and halted at one of the tribe's home, for lunch. It was an out-of-the-world experience for all of us having food there, in that ambience, which we could only dream of. After finishing our lunch, we headed back towards Maredumilli, while birding on the way. We saw some activity on the road side, we stopped our vehicles and on checking, there they were, a bunch of Black-throated and White-rumped Munias, hopping on one branch to the other. These were followed by a sight of the Chestnut-Headed Bee-Eater and a glimpse of the Vernal Hanging Parrot, followed by a Black Eagle hovering over the sky, Oriental Turtle Dove and a lot of Crested Serpent Eagles of course ;).

Picture: M Srinivas - Bronzed Drongo



Picture: M Srinivas - Black Throated Munia

Overall, it was a great experience Birding at this location, including the drive from Maredumilli and we have recorded about 60 species. We could’ve spotted more than a 100 species had we reached there early in the morning, say by 6:30 or 7. It is time more trips are planned for Mattam Bhimavaram, as we sure can expect a lot of surprises :).

HBP260: Mallela Theertham

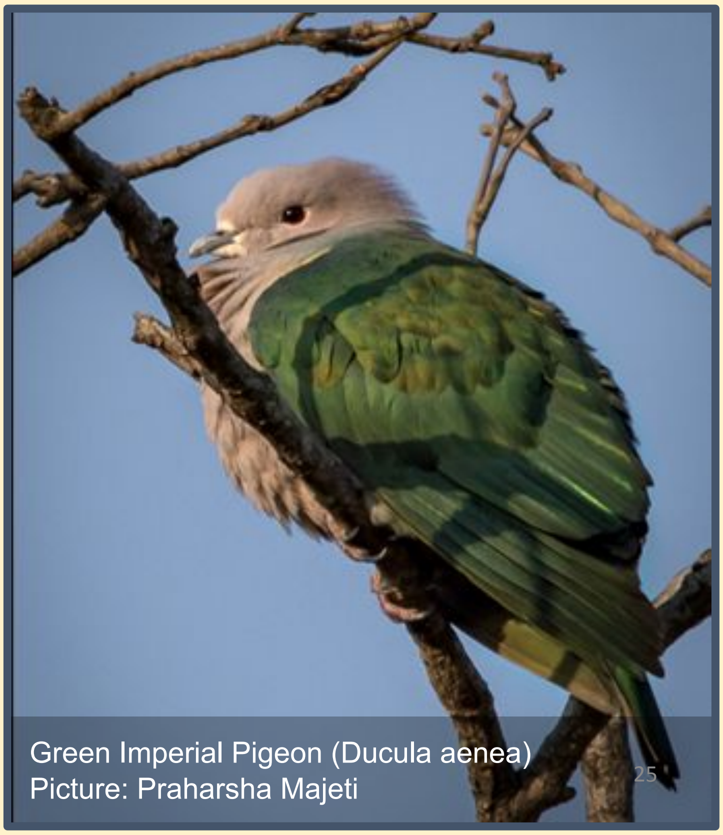
Praharsha Majeti

Number of Participants: 27 | Date: 17th Feb 2019 | Number of species recorded: 75

Mallela Theertham is a waterfall located in the Nallamala Forest in Nagarkurnool, Telangana. It is located around 185 km from Hyderabad. A walk down of 350 steps is required to access the waterfall. The breathtaking ghat sections of Nallamala Forest, Varied Flora and fauna spread all across the way, Adventurous off-roading and the beautiful landscapes add to major highlights of Mallela Theertham.

The day started with a few enthusiastic birders gathering at the Srisailam Exit 14 Toll Gate meeting point at 5:00 AM. After all the participants arrived, we began our journey towards Mallela Theertham. We had breakfast at Mannanur Check post area waiting for the mist to lift and favorable light conditions in order to observe and photograph birds at this early hour.

All the participants were split into different groups and into different cars traversing through the dense Nallamala Forest range. We drove slowly trying to observe the birds that are spread on either sides of the road. Some of the birds we observed en route were Brahminy Starling (Sturnia pagodarum), Rosy Starling (Pastor roseus), Rose-ringed Parakeets (Psittacula krameri) and Pied Bushchat (Saxicola caprata). One of the participant Srinivas M also spotted Yellow-wattled Lapwings (Vanellus malabaricus). Moving further into the thick forest cover we spotted lots of Indian Jungle Crows (Corvus macrorhynchos), Black-rumped Flameback woodpeckers (Dinopium benghalense), Yellow-crowned Woodpecker (Leiopicus mahrattensis), Brown-headed Barbet (Megalaima zeylanica), Indian Roller (Coracias benghalensis), Oriental Magpie Robin (Copsychus saularis), White-bellied Drongo (Dicrurus caerulescens) and Rufous Treepie (Dendrocitta vagabunda).



Green Imperial Pigeon (Ducula aenea)
Picture: Praharsha Majeti

While we stopped at a location while checking for a few more birds, we sighted a Jungle owlet (Glaucidium radiatum), which was very cooperative letting all the participants to observe and photograph it. It was sitting on a perch no more than 15 meters from all of us giving us some beautiful frame filling shots.

Jungle Owlet (Glaucidium radiatum)
Picture: Praharsha Majeti

Moving further ahead, we spotted a magnificent Crested Serpent Eagle (Spilornis cheela) perched on a branch about 5 feet from ground level. It was a beautiful scene with the Eagle and the thick forest as a backdrop. One of the participants Srinivas M spotted a Green Imperial Pigeon (Ducula aenea) sitting on the top of a tree which was a lifer to a few of the birders. Another team spotted Orange-breasted Green Pigeons (Treron bicinctus) at the Forest base camp. Couple of expert birders Sudeshna Dey and Sriram Reddy spotted Eurasian Sparrowhawk (Accipiter nisus).

Eurasian Sparrowhawk (Accipiter nisus)
Picture: Sriram Reddy

A few other birders joined us at Mallela Theertham and then started descending down towards the waterfall. On our way down we spotted a Crested Hawk Eagle (Nisaetus cirrhatus) in the distant valley. After reaching the bottom we sighted a few birds like Tickell's Thrush (Turdus unicolor), Verditer Flycatcher (Eumyias thalassinus), Common Kingfisher (Alcedo atthis), Tawny-bellied babbler (Dumetia hyperythra), Greenish Warbler (Phylloscopus trochiloides).

One of the most exciting moments was when one of the expert birders Sriram Reddy, spotted an Oriental Scops Owl (Otus sunia) hiding in a thick bamboo cover. It was a very challenging situation to photograph the owl and we decided not to spook the bird trying to get too close to it for a clear shot.

Oriental Scops Owl (Otus sunia)
Picture: Fareed Mohammed

eBird Checklist:
https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S53210912

HBP261: Ananthagiri Hills

Sourav Das

© Sourav Kumar Das

Last week of FEB and last birdwalk of the month. The location which can provoke any birder to wake up early and join HBP birdwalk. But that day we had very less number of people, only 10.

I did carpool with Phani Sir and Subrata Dada. We started from hyderabad around 5 in the morning. We met others at the meeting point 'APPA junction'. Had tea and started around 6. The atmosphere was cool. On the way we heard calls of yellow wattled lapwing, red wattled lapwing, Indian thick-knee and gray francolin. We reached Ananthagiri around 7. Ananthagiri is located at vikarabad district and is one of the dense forest in telangana and a beautiful hotspot for birding. My 2nd personal fav in and around hyderabad.

The temple location is our usual birding hotspot, but now a days there has been some restriction made for birding and camera charges has started. So we need permission or else we need to complete birding and leave the place before people arrives. All these need to be taken care of, which i got to know this time.

Starting with our birding session first good one to appear was the tawny bellied babbler which were in good numbers, along with it was the spot-breasted fantail hopping nearby. Crossing the temple we moved little inside when we heard the brown fish owl and mottled wood owl call. Some people took record shot of it.

This time we noticed more dogs than usual roaming around. For which we did not saw any thrush till then. moving on we saw 1 yellow-footed green pigeon on tree top, small minivet male and female, common iora, cinereous tit, white-browed bulbul all in the same bush. Nearby was a small stream area where Mohit bhai saw a jerdon's nightjar, which is its usual habitat.

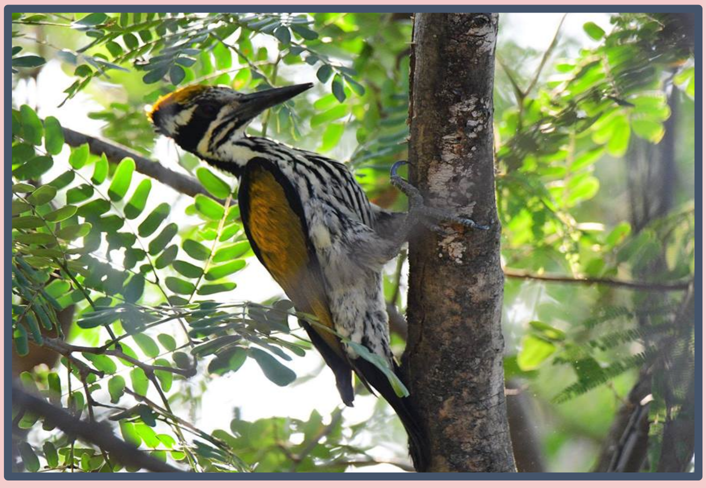
Moving forward we went to the open area where we took the group photo. After that we went to explore the regular nightjar location to see if we can find any. Same place 3 times before, i have experienced this excitement to see my first nightjar, but have failed. This time

Picture: Nisha Khurana - Common Tailorbird

Phani sir promised me that he will find one for sure. We went inside tracking movement near the stream, we saw white-bellied drongo in plenty, chestnut-shouldered petronia, eurasian collared dove and few plum headed parakeet and rose-ringed parakeet whose sound were all around that place. We heard call of crested hawk eagle and mins later we had a glimpse of it flying. Activity was good at that place where pale-billed flowerpecker, thick-billed flowerpecker, chestnut tailed starling, common woodshrike and sunbirds were sunbathing on a fig tree. Suddenly Phani sir saw a nightjar with a short flight, he called me and we started tracking, when it flew and moved to a different patch nearby. It was a savanna nightjar and believe me it was camouflage at its best i have ever seen. We took photo after difficult spotting. i was happy from inside when Phani Sir sighted a jungle nightjar flying just over us. it perched on an open branch. i took a record shot and then it flew away. People who went deep inside to the grassland area saw ashy drongo, bay-backed shrike, log-tailed shrike, lesser Whitethroat and jungle prinia.

We came out from that area and started moving back to some other good patches. On the way we saw a Blue-faced Malkoha, greenish warbler and a pair of Jerdon's leafbird. We sat near the temple hoping to see a blue-capped rock thrush and fortunately we saw one male there. Few Asian paradise flycatcher male and female were flying around. We saw an Indian Blackbird female along with few Orange headed thrush. We saw one White-browed Fantail and a black-hooded oriole on tree top, they don't give regular sighting here. Few commoners like the tickell's blue flycatcher, grey Wagtail, greater coucal, common tailor bird, ashy prinia and few doves were seen near the temple pond.

Picture: Srikanth Ayyagari - Rose ringed parakeet



Picture: Venkatesh VT- White naped woodpecker

We headed to another place which was our last patch. We sat there for 30 mins. First came the confusing one, Grey-breasted prinia non-breeding male, which confused us with Brown-cheeked fulvetta. There were few of those. Then we saw black-naped monarch, the rare western crown warbler spotted by Phani sir with binocs as it was very difficult to photograph, few Indian gray hornbills, coppersmith barbet, Indian white-eye and many peacocks. Large Cuckooshrike gave a special appearance when we were heading back to our cars.On our way back home we were expecting few raptors and indian courser but hard luck. Shikra, indian roller, and white-throated kingfisher gave us climax appearance.

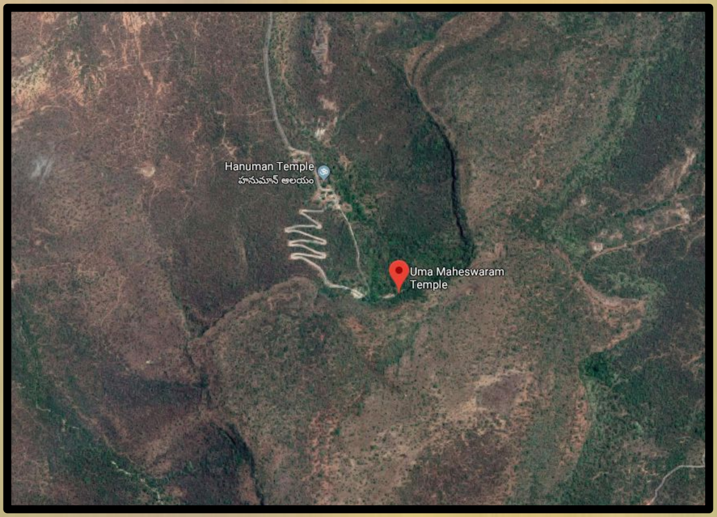
Rendezvous with the Black Eagle at Uma Maheshwaram

Sriram Reddy

The Black Eagle (*Ictinaetus malaiensis*) in telugu is called Adavi nalla gadda which could roughly translate to "**Darkness of the Forest**" is a resident of Nallamalla forest region. *Ictinaetus(ictinos + aetos)* from the Greek *ictinos* means 'kite-like' and *aetos* means 'eagle'. Which means "**Kite-like Eagle**". *Malaiensis* is a latin word which means Malaysia (the type specimen described from Malaysia).

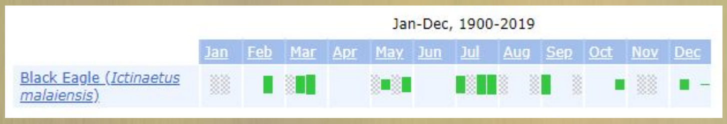
As part of Hyderabad Birding Pals(HBP)'s 260th Bird walk, a group of birders visited Uma Maheshwaram on Sunday, 17th Feb 2019 at around 3PM. A Black eagle was sighted flying effortlessly in the sky, turning and circling, rising and gliding for long spells with seldom wing beats. The eagle was sighted for 45 minutes in the canopy of Uma Maheshwaram hills. When it is gliding, the speed is unusually low. It was sailing low without a wing flap over upper canopy of the forest in search of a prey. It was possibly using the thermals flowing round and over the hilly terrain of this habitat.

The Black Eagle flight is spectacular to watch, a sight which will be cherished for long time. Uma Maheshwaram temple (16.3664137, 78.7197859) is located about 150 km from Hyderabad on the Srisailam highway. It's on the edge of Nallamala forest, the largest tiger reserve in India. It is an important birding hotspot of Telangana.



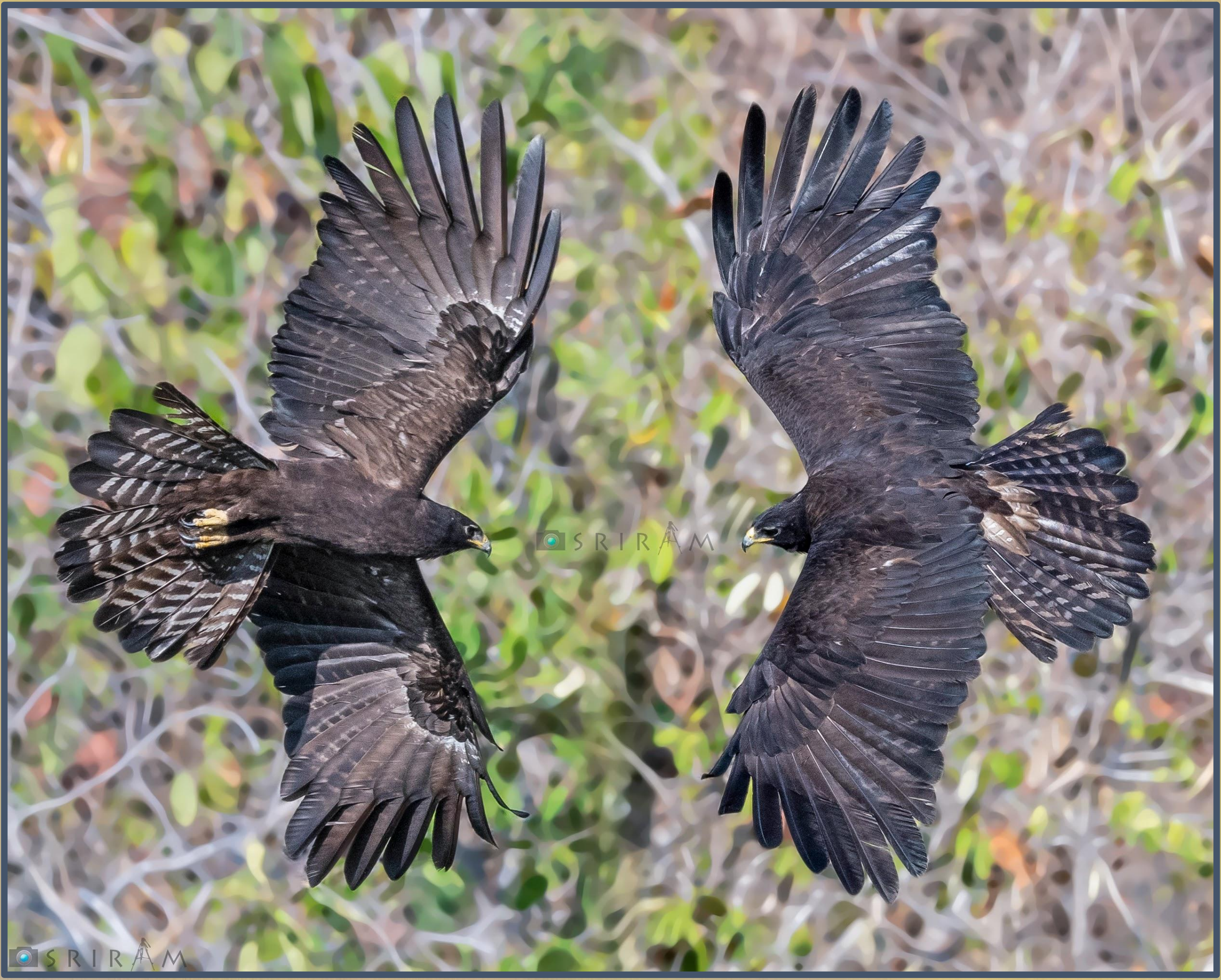
Location of the hotspot

The forest around Uma Maheshwaram is dry deciduous and has a hilly terrain. This place is the ideal habitat for the Black Eagle. It was sighted 39 times in and around this region.



Sightings of Black Eagle at Uma Maheshwaram uptill now

The Black Eagle as the name suggests, is blackish-brown to very dark chocolate-brown and looks black from distance. Its secondaries and shoulders are slightly paler, underparts dull and slightly paler. Its upper-tail coverts have a palish patch, which is clearly visible. Black tail faintly barred paler above and narrowly barred pale greyish below. It has feathered legs. The bill is dull grey color with a black tip. Cere, gape and feet are bright yellow in color.



Lower and Upper views of Black Eagle

In field it's easy to identify this bird in comparison with other raptors. Black eagle has unique wing shape and it's flight posture is unmistakable. It has proportionately large wings, broadest at the inner hand.

It's upturned primaries with characteristically widely splayed tips and paddle-shaped wings enable it glide smoothly at very slow speeds just above the upper canopy of the forest.

The Black Eagle flies slowly above the forest canopy in search for nests with egg or nestlings. It's big sharp talons enables it to grasp entire nest, dislodge them from the place and then prey upon the inmates. This behaviour was recorded once here in year 2016 at this very spot.

Black Eagle

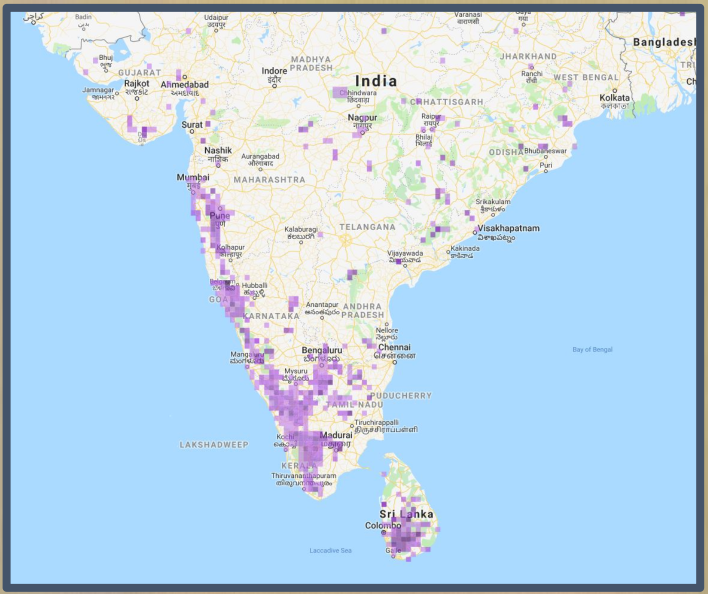
Usually, a single Black Eagle is sighted most of the times at this hotspot. A maximum of 3 species were seen together few times. This is the only region in Telangana where the sightings are regular. There are isolated sightings from Kawal wildlife sanctuary, Ananthagiri forest and Gubbala Mangammma temple (Khammam). Though its distribution is spread in Southern parts of India, it's sightings in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh are present but very rare.

References

Grimmett, R., Inskipp, C., & Inskipp, T., 2011. *Birds of the Indian Subcontinent.* 2nd ed.

Naoroji, R., 2006. *Birds of prey of the Indian Subcontinent*. 1st ed. New Delhi: Om Books International.

Rasmussen, P. C., & Anderton, J. C., 2012. *Birds of South Asia: the Ripley guide*. 2nd ed.


India
GUJARAT
MADHYA PRADESH
JHARKHAND
WEST BENGAL
Bangladesh
CHHATTISGARH
ODISHA
MAHARASHTRA
TELANGANA
ANDHRA PRADESH
KARNATAKA
GOA
KERALA
TAMIL NADU
PUDUCHERRY
LAKSHADWEEP
Sri Lanka
Colombo
Bay of Bengal
Laccadive Sea
Rajkot
Ahmedabad
Jamnagar
Surat
Indore
Nagpur
Chhindwara
Raipur
Bhilai
Ranchi
Kolkata
Bhubaneswar
Puri
Nashik
Aurangabad
Mumbai
Pune
Kolhapur
Kalaburagi
Hubballi
Srikakulam
Visakhapatnam
Kakinada
Vijayawada
Anantapur
Nellore
Chennai
Bengaluru
Mangaluru
Mysuru
Tiruchirappalli
Madurai
Kochi
Thiruvananthapuram
Varanasi
Udaipur
Bhuj

Species distribution map of Black Eagle. Source: eBird.org

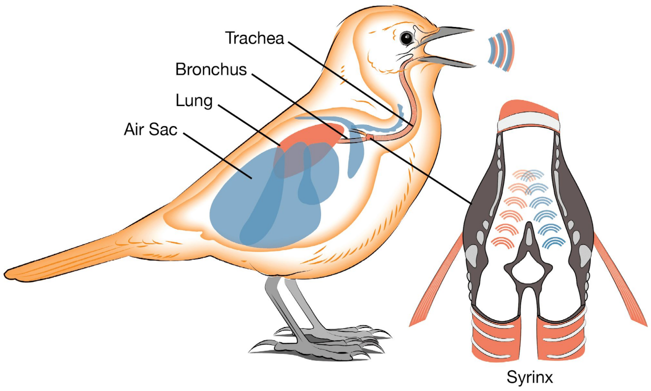
©Gopalakrishna 2016

Picture: Gopalakrishna R - Black Eagle Uma Maheshwaram 2016

LISTENING TO THE BIRDS

Gopalakrishna R

Seeing birds is indeed a feast for the eyes, whereas listening to them is a much greater treat for the ears. Bird calls are numerous and even a single bird species calls in multiple styles. Of course this adds to the complexity in identification but it also gives us a better understanding of the situation. Birds make morning calls, mating calls, alarm calls, territory marking calls etc. all describe the stance of the bird at that current time point. Thus we get to know more about the bird listening to their calls. The best birdwatching sites are amidst thick vegetation which all the more reinforces the importance of listening to the calls which also gets us to narrow down the range at which the birds can be observed. Some calls are so typical that the species can be identified based on their calls. The identification of some birds especially the nightjars in the Indian subcontinent are still best identified based on the calls they make rather than a sighting. Some birds are loud and vocal that their calls travel a huge distance giving its identity.



Picture: https://academy.allaboutbirds.org/birdsong/3

Picture: Mb Das - Pale billed Flowerpecker

PBF Call: https://www.xeno-canto.org/species/Dicaeum-erythrorhynchos

The syrinx: Long before understanding the biology I have wondered how such a small sunbird could make such a loud and clear sound. With time, I came to realize that the birds are equipped with a specialized tympaniform membrane at the base of the trachea called the syrinx, which vibrates to produce the bird calls and songs. The bronchial muscles regulate the vibrations and this also enables several birds to mimic other bird calls as well as sometimes even humans. The syrinx is present in most of the birds and their function is very tightly regulated by the muscles and the attachments. They syrinx is considered to be one of the best evolutionary adaptations for communication. Without a syrinx a bird would have been making low pitched growls maybe like some of the fictional dinosaur movies which you might have seen.

Types of calls: Birds make a variety of calls. Some of the calls which are melodious made at particular times are called as bird songs. Example: the whistling schoolboy call of a Malabar whistling thrush is made mostly at dawn and dusk. Different calls have different meanings. Some birds are good at mimicking the calls of the other birds. To the best of human understanding, we have classified the bird calls into a few broad classifications.

i) **Alarm Calls:** If a raptor is flying above a small bird such as a tailor bird or a magpie robin makes short sharp noted calls. This evidently alerts the other birds in the surrounding area without disclosing the location of the alarm maker. But if the raptor such as an owl is sitting perched looking for a prey the alarm calls are different. So the alarm calls also describe the predator's position to the other birds so that they can act accordingly.

©Gopalakrishna 2016

Picture: Gopalakrishna R-Jungle Babbler and Mottled Wood Owl
JB Call: https://www.xeno-canto.org/species/Turdoides-striata
MWO Call: https://www.xeno-canto.org/species/Strix-ocellata

ii) **Contact/separation calls:** Most birds are social gatherers and they go in a flock. There is an added safety in numbers and more eyes to watch on predators. Birds foraging continuously make small squeaks and chirps to inform others that they are around. And when they are separated they are seen to continuously call and trying to get back to their group. This not only assures the togetherness of the group, but also helps the birds to find food sources more effectively.

Picture: Kishore Bakshi -Black tailed Godwits
BTG Call: https://www.xeno-canto.org/species/Limosa-limosa

iii) **Flight calls:** Birds make flight calls which actually help us to identify what species they belong to. The actual reason to make such calls may be to indicate direction and altitude of flight which at a high speed and maneuvering would be very helpful to avoid collisions and quicker to reach the place of destination. Our understanding is much behind in this aspect.

Picture: Gopalakrishna R - Cinereous Tit
CT Call: https://www.xeno-canto.org/species/Parus-cinereus

iv) **Begging calls:** The younger members of each bird species are known to make rapid short calls with intermittent wingbeat to catch the attention of the parents to get themselves fed. A keen birder could anticipate the presence of a nest nearby by listening to these calls. It's wise not to venture too close to the nests as the birds would be stressed by our presence.

Picture: Robin JI -Indian Roller
IR Call: https://www.xeno-canto.org/species/Coracias-benghalensis

v) **Mating calls:** Some of the mostly quiet birds turn otherwise during the breeding season making calls/sounds continuously to attract a mate. These are prevalent during the breeding season and birding is to be done with caution during these times. This time of the year makes it easier to listen and sight a bird which is otherwise impossible to see/hear.

Picture: Virag Sharma -Sarus crane
SC Call: https://www.xeno-canto.org/species/Antigone-antigone

Picture: MVN Vinay -Black winged Kite
BWK Call: https://www.xeno-canto.org/species/Elanus-caeruleus

vi) **Territory marking calls:** Some of the top order predators/ scavengers such as the Aquilias and other eagles also some kites make their calls in order to ward off any of the same species venturing into their territory. These birds will hunt and breed in their territory and would aggressively chase away any other member of the same species which comes by considering them as a competition for food and resources.

vii) **Mimicry:** this is the repetition of the call/ sound made by other birds or objects. This trick could be used for several purposes. An Ashy drongo mimics the alarm calls to scare birds away leaving their food behind and then taking the advantage to feed. Lyre bird one of the best mimicry bird artist which does mimicry to attract the mate. Some birds mimic to show their skill attracting a potential mate. Mimicry requires considerable practice for the birds too. These skills improve with time and constantly improved upon.

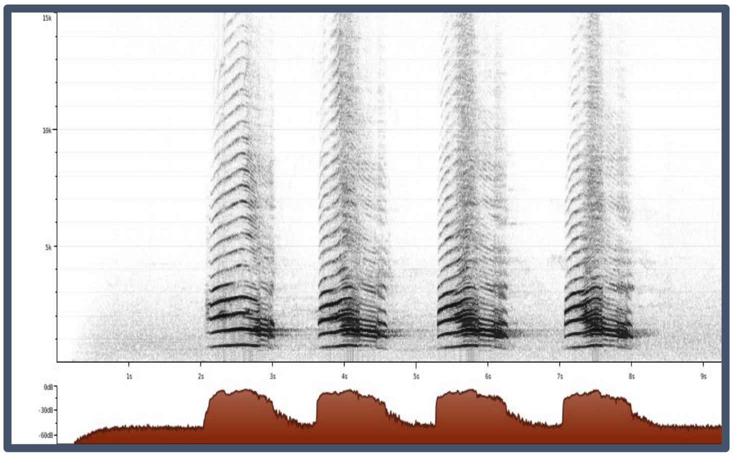
Picture: Prasanna kumar Mamidala -Greater racket tailed drongo
GRTD Call: *https://www.xeno-canto.org/species/Dicrurus-paradiseus*

The sounds in the range of 20Hz to 20,000 Hz are in the audible range of humans whereas the birds have a much wider audible range. Birds are sensitive to sound frequencies between 1,000 Hz to 40,000 Hz. The syrinx is capable of producing the sounds well in this range too.

The frequency range above 20,000 Hz are inaudible to human ears which adds on to the incapability of humans to properly understand the bird calls. Therefore, implementations of better technology such as a parabolic call recorders which could record this sound as well and upon slowing down the speed, they could become audible to us would be ideal for research. The recorded sound could be represented better graphically as a sonogram and it is a useful tool for us to identify and understand birds.

A Bird Sonogram

A sonogram or a sound spectrogram is a graphical representation of the sound frequency on the y axis and the time in the x axis of a graph. The graphical representation is a much more accurate and effective way to identify and understand birds rather than just our ears listening to the timbre of the sound.



Picture:Xeno-canto ; *Sound: Paul Marvin*
Source : Xeno canto: *https://www.xeno-canto.org/species/Pavo-cristatus*

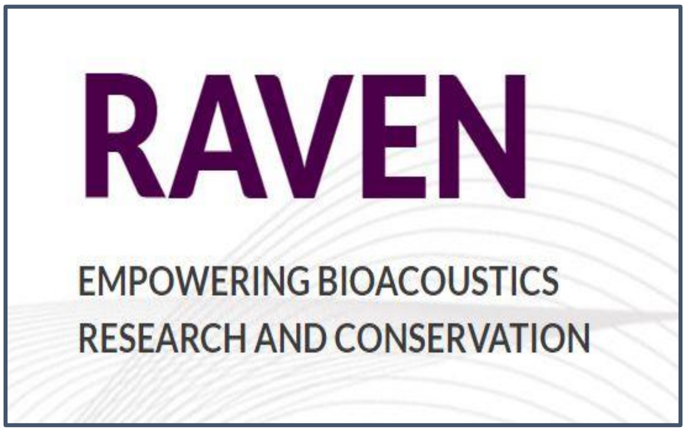
The use of this technology and capable instruments aid in understanding even the particular "accent" of the same species in different geographies. Birds also listen to the other calls made by same as well as different species which gives them a sense of an approaching bird which could be a potential mate, a predator or just a passerby. With the use of a sonogram time delay, intensity and many more parameters can be calculated which could enhance the knowledge of foraging altitude, social behaviour and therefore improve our understanding of the feathered friends.

The presence of certain insects also predisposes the presence of certain birds in the region. To a normal human ear this might not be evident but when it gets recorded on a sonogram, the co-relations could be understood better.

How to make a Sonogram / Sound Spectrogram

The first and foremost requirement to make a sonogram is a sound recording. Recording can be done with a simple phone, or a better sound recorder or a parabolic sound recorder which cuts out out the noise. Ultimately it comes down to a recorded audio file.

The programmes from the Cornell lab of Ornithology is available at a premium for the Macintosh users. The windows users have a lot of programmes, to name a few- the RavenLite or the Audacity could be used. For the iPhones, there is an app called as ‘SpectrumView’ and the android users have an app called as SpectralPro Analyzer. All these gives spectrograms which could be useful for bird identification purposes.



SpectrumView
SpectrumView – Frequency Analysis Software

The tricky part here is to get a good recording (without much background noise) for the identification purposes. The best ways are to use a parabolic focuser (even a homemade one is fine) which cuts off other sounds, or even adding additional microphones to your mobile phone or your recorder. The recorded calls could be played to compare with the existing known calls. Some calls are present in the Google play books for the Birds of Indian subcontinent. There is a dedicated website, Xeno-canto which is filled with bird call recordings which also serves as a repository to collect bird calls.

In future this might even serve to make an application which when used directly gives you the names of the bird sounds it listens to. To those who are new to birding, please do listen well while birding to the bird calls and encourage fellow birders too. With practice, you will eventually become a sharp listener to fluently identify birds from their calls/songs. So keep your eyes and more importantly ears open. Happy birding.

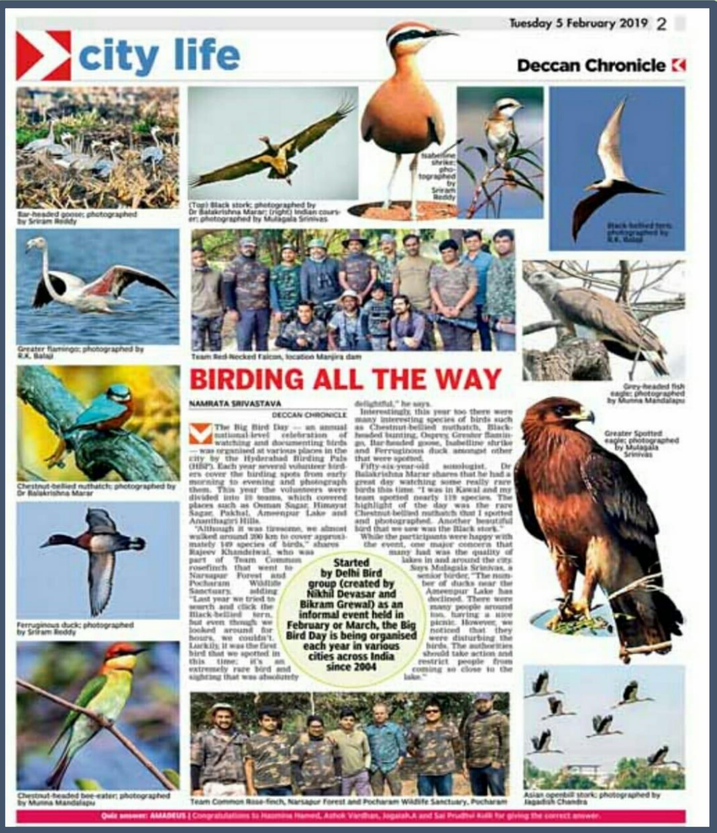
BIG BIRD DAY 2019 in a Capsule

Gopalakrishna R

Hyderabad Birding Pals Celebrated the Big Bird Day on 3rd February 2019 for Telangana. This birding group divided into over ten teams to scout various regions in Telangana. A snapshot survey of the whole state is what is intended by this birding venture. Several Birders and bird photographers participated in this event in Telangana alone. As the time chosen was towards the end of the wintering season, the migratory birds came into the account.

This birding event was extensively covered by the media understanding the importance of conservation of birds and bird habitats in the region. Hyderabad birding Pals have been a part of the supply of a great deal of data in the form of sightings and with the members travelling throughout the state with an arsenal of cameras to provide photographic evidence for the same. Ever since Hyderabad birding pals have come into place, the overall birding picture for the Telangana region has been enriched very colourfully. A lot more species new to this region has been added. There are keen eyes from the group looking out for birdwatching opportunities at all times and exploring new areas which aids in better conservation of birds for the region.

The big bird day bird watching provided several groups with some of the everyday uncommon sightings for the region such as the Black bellied tern, the dusky eagle owl, orange breasted green pigeon, the grey headed fish eagle, the Indian nuthatch, the migratory bar headed goose, the rare Black stork, Ferruginous pochard, chestnut headed bee eaters, greater flamingos, desert wheatears, migratory warblers, several species of woodpeckers and snipes etc.



Tuesday 5 February 2019 2

city life

Deccan Chronicle

Bar-headed goose; photographed by Sriram Reddy

(Top) Black stork; photographed by Dr Balakrishna Marar; (right) Indian courser; photographed by Mulagala Srinivas

Isabelline shrike; photographed by Sriram Reddy

Black-bellied tern; photographed by R.K. Balaji

Greater flamingo; photographed by R.K. Balaji

Team Red-Necked Falcon, location Manjira dam

Grey-headed fish eagle; photographed by Munna Mandalapu

BIRDING ALL THE WAY

NAMRATA SRIVASTAVA

DECCAN CHRONICLE

Started by Delhi Bird group (created by Nikhil Devasar and Bikram Grewal) as an informal event held in February or March, the Big Bird Day is being organised each year in various cities across India since 2004

Greater Spotted eagle; photographed by Mulagala Srinivas

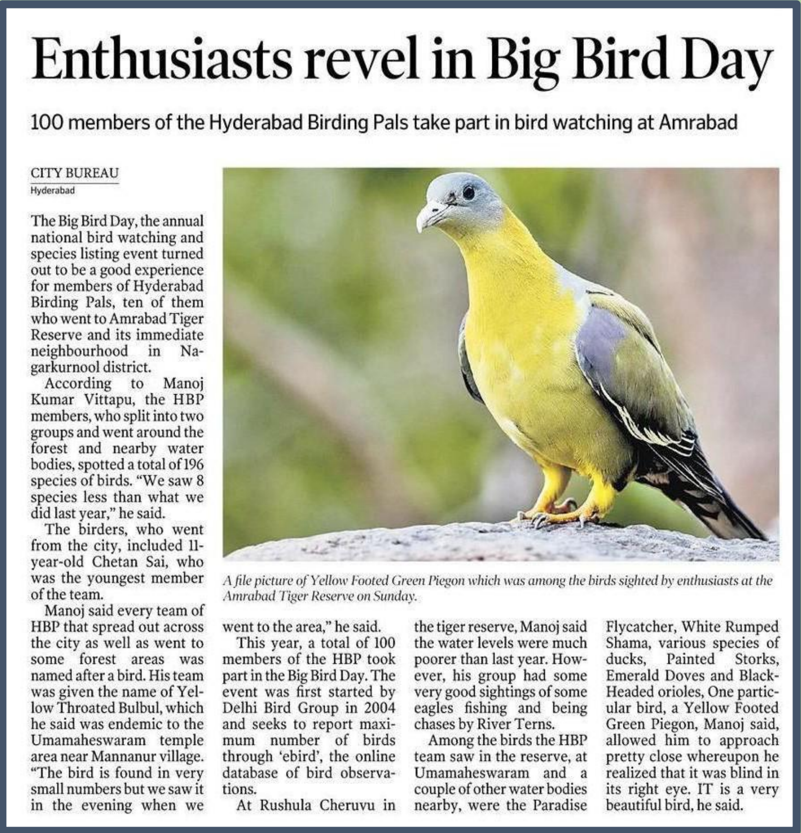
Chestnut-bellied nuthatch; photographed by Dr Balakrishna Marar

Ferruginous duck; photographed by Sriram Reddy

Chestnut-headed bee-eater; photographed by Munna Mandalapu

Team Common Rose-finch, Narsapur Forest and Pocharam Wildlife Sanctuary, Pocharam

Asian openbill stork; photographed by Jagadish Chandra



Enthusiasts revel in Big Bird Day

100 members of the Hyderabad Birding Pals take part in bird watching at Amrabad

CITY BUREAU
Hyderabad

The Big Bird Day, the annual national bird watching and species listing event turned out to be a good experience for members of Hyderabad Birding Pals, ten of them who went to Amrabad Tiger Reserve and its immediate neighbourhood in Nagarkurnool district.

According to Manoj Kumar Vittapu, the HBP members, who split into two groups and went around the forest and nearby water bodies, spotted a total of 196 species of birds. "We saw 8 species less than what we did last year," he said.

The birders, who went from the city, included 11-year-old Chetan Sai, who was the youngest member of the team.

Manoj said every team of HBP that spread out across the city as well as went to some forest areas was named after a bird. His team was given the name of Yellow Throated Bulbul, which he said was endemic to the Umamaheswaram temple area near Mannanur village. "The bird is found in very small numbers but we saw it in the evening when we went to the area," he said.

This year, a total of 100 members of the HBP took part in the Big Bird Day. The event was first started by Delhi Bird Group in 2004 and seeks to report maximum number of birds through 'ebird', the online database of bird observations.

At Rushula Cheruvu in the tiger reserve, Manoj said the water levels were much poorer than last year. However, his group had some very good sightings of some eagles fishing and being chases by River Terns.

Among the birds the HBP team saw in the reserve, at Umamaheswaram and a couple of other water bodies nearby, were the Paradise Flycatcher, White Rumped Shama, various species of ducks, Painted Storks, Emerald Doves and Black-Headed orioles, One particular bird, a Yellow Footed Green Piegon, Manoj said, allowed him to approach pretty close whereupon he realized that it was blind in its right eye. IT is a very beautiful bird, he said.

A file picture of Yellow Footed Green Piegon which was among the birds sighted by enthusiasts at the Amrabad Tiger Reserve on Sunday.

The following table lists the locations scouted and the team leaders for the event.

Areas scouted for Big Bird Day 2019 by Hyderabad Birding Pals

No	Checklist	Team Leader	Location
1	S52357964	Mulagala Srinivas	ICRISAT Campus, Medak County, Telangana, IN
2	S52357978	Mulagala Srinivas	Ameenpur Lake, Hyderabad, Medak County, Telangana, IN
3	S52326400	Sriram Reddy	Manjeera Wildlife Sanctuary, Medak County, Telangana, IN
4	S52334110	Ashis Kumar Pradhan	Jogipet Lake, Medak County, Telangana, IN
5	S52325797	Syamala Ruapkula	Ameenpur Lake, Hyderabad, Medak County, Telangana, IN
6	S52329997	Ashis Kumar Pradhan	Anna Sagar Lake, Medak County, Telangana, IN
7	S52358940	Gopalakrishna R	Kawal Tiger Reserve, Adilabad County, Telangana, IN
8	S52353946	Kalyan Ineni	Himayat Sagar Lake, Rangareddy County, Telangana, IN
9	S52332478	Sourav Das	Osmania University, Rangareddy County, Telangana, IN
10	S52323619	Hari Krishna Adepu	Pakhal Lake, Warangal County, Telangana, IN
11	S52329664	Sourav Das	Edulabad Lake, Rangareddy County, Telangana, IN
12	S52353554	Kalyan Ineni	Kokapet Lake, Rangareddy County, Telangana, IN
13	S52334909	Hari Krishna Adepu	Keshavpur Lake, Karimnagar County, Telangana, IN
14	S52326468	Phani krishna Ravi	Osman Sagar Lake, Rangareddy County, Telangana, IN
15	S52365464	RK Balaji	Pocharam Reservoir, Medak County, Telangana, IN
16	S52364638	Srinivas Mallela	Narsapur Reserve Forest, Medak County, Telangana, IN
17	S52355354	Fareed Mohmed	Kotepally Lake, Rangareddy County, Telangana, IN
18	S52364868	Manoj Kumar Vittapu	Dindi Reservoir, Nalgonda County, Telangana, IN
19	S52322093	Fareed Mohmed	Ananthagiri Hills, Rangareddy County, Telangana, IN
20	S52364700	Manoj Kumar Vittapu	Rushula Cheruvu, Mahbubnagar County, Telangana, IN
21	S52371149	Abhishek ravindra	Mallela Theertham, Mahbubnagar County, Telangana, IN
22	S52366508	Abhishek ravindra	Uma Maheswaram, Mahbubnagar County, Telangana, IN
23	S52369088	Abhishek ravindra	Nallamalla Forest Range, Mahbubnagar County, Telangana, IN
24	S52371875	Abhishek ravindra	Dindi Reservoir, Nalgonda County, Telangana, IN
25	S52371619	Abhishek ravindra	Brahmanpalli, Mahbubnagar County, Telangana, IN

It's time for some Statistics

Big Bird Day 2019 recorded a whopping **12,176 birds** on a single day, **February 3rd, 2019,** which included **293 bird species** for the region Telangana. The location with the maximum number of birds was at the lake situated at the heart of the city -Osman Sagar, Hyderabad with **1805 birds** comprising of **139 species** followed by the Kawal tiger reserve, Adilabad counting **1783 individuals** which comprised of **118 species**. The highest number of species observed by a team was **196 species** at the Nallamala Tiger Reserve, Mahboobnagar.

The highest number of any single species was recorded by the plum headed parakeet which accounted to **530 individuals**. The water birds followed the top spots with the common coot recording **372 individuals**. Among the waders , the little stints topped with **292 individuals**. The little stint also tops the count for the highest migratory individuals for this big bird day count followed by the bar headed geese which accounted for **276 individuals**. About **40 species** observed were just a single individual and about **23 species** were just a pair in number indicating the intra-day rarity .

The green bee eater was found to be the Commonest bird with **24 of the 25 locations** observing the presence of this species which accounted to **178 individuals**. This is followed by Black drongo and the House crow being observed at **22 of the 25 locations** which accounted to **148 and 144 individuals** respectively.

The raptors (including eagles, kites, harriers, owls and owlets) included about **165 individuals** dispersed among **23 species**. The highest count of **34 individuals** was recorded at **15 out of 25 locations** by the Black Winged Kite which also took the position of the commonest and the highest counted raptor. This was followed by Shikra with **17 individuals observed at 14 locations** and Black Kites which counted to **19 individuals observed at 10 locations** for this Big bird day. Among the owls/owlets the Jungle owlet was highest which accounted to **7 individuals located at 4 spots** the remaining being single individual or a pair at the maximum.

This statistics holds true for about **88 Birdwatchers** of Hyderabad Birding Pals, who are listed, who spent approximately about **785 man-hours** observing birds in the state by travelling an approximately totalled distance of about **6545 kilometers** to various birding destinations. A big **CONGRATULATIONS** to all the Teams for the effort put in for The Big Bird Day 2019.

What’s in my camera bag?

Manoj Kumar Vittapu

When Joseph Nicéphore Niépce (a French inventor) invented the first successful camera in 1800’s he wouldn’t have imagined how photography is going to change world. Photography became a hobby for some and a profession for some people around the world and it definitely changed mine too.

I am Manoj Kumar Vittapu, an IT employee turned into an entrepreneur, started photography 4 years ago with a Nikon “Point and shoot” to get some pictures during long rides on my bike. Later, I slowly picked up wildlife photography using DSLR and then the real game began. I started my Bird Photography with HBP around 3 years ago, In my journey, I have picked up photography skills from my seniors in the group. Earlier it was tough for me to take photographs with mixed combination of Sony a6000 + Canon f/5.6 400mm prime lens which I operated with manual focus for 2 years. It was different experience with a mirrorless camera where in, I had to use manual focus every time. Although I was able to capture pretty good images, I was feeling the pain to manage the gear. Then I moved to Nikon gear as suggested by my mentors and friends.

My current gear details:-

Camera Body: Nikon D5300 is a 24.2 Megapixel DX-format CMOS sensor with exclusive Nikon’s EXSPEED 4 image engine. I was quite comfortable with this lightweight body which I can handle all camera option with right hand while taking photographs. Also with 5 fps, in-built Wi-Fi, GPS, SD (Secure Digital) and UHS-I compliant SDHC and SDXC and with many more options this is a perfect camera for amateur photographers. For more specification about this camera please go thru this link.

http://www.nikon.co.in/en_IN/product/digital-slr-cameras/d5300#tech_specs

Nikon
D5300

Nikon
D5300

Lenses: Since I am interested in Wildlife, Macro and Landscape photography I use following lenses on purpose.

i) **AF-P DX NIKKOR 18-55MM F/3.5-5.6G VR** is a Kit lens that was packaged with my D5300. This F Mount, DX format lens comes with 18-55mm focal length and maximum aperture of f/3.5-5.6 and minimum aperture of f/22-38. It has button to switch between Manual and (Manual/Autofocus) and button for VR and non-VR mode. The lens always does a great job for portrait and landscape shots.

ii) **AF-S NIKKOR 200-500MM F/5.6E ED VR** is an incredible lens for wildlife & sports photography. The constant f/5.6 aperture at 500mm focal length is one of the best I like in this lens. The lens comes with an F mount and supports both FX and DX Sensor camera bodies. It focuses very fast and the output of the images is very impressive. Maximum aperture f/5.6 and minimum aperture is f/32. It comes with Type E AF–S lens with built–in CPU and F mount, weighing around 2.09 Kgs.

iii) **52MM Socko 0.43X Wide Angle High Definition Lens with Macro lens** is Wide Angle Zoom through Converter Lens is Designed for use on lenses with Front Filter Threads. This Lens Provides A 57% Wider Angle of View and Features Full Zoom-Through Capability.It is a low cost lens with impressive output of macro images.

PRO SERIES 0.43X HIGH DEFINITION AF WIDE ANGLE LENS
MACRO

Seek thermal

iv) **SEEK Thermal** lens is a highly portable, versatile and durable thermal imaging camera that plugs directly into your Smartphone. This is very useful lens during the nocturnal photography. This device translates thermal energy (infrared light) into a visible image on your phone. Compact's wide, 36 degree field of view is ideal for use both indoors and close-range outdoors, allowing you to detect thermal signatures up to 1000 feet away. With a detectable temperature range of -40 to 626 degrees Fahrenheit, pinpointing energy loss, spotting missing insulation, and identifying overheated circuitry are just a few of its thousands of use cases. Compact's focusable lens allows users to fine-tune their thermal imagery. It also comes with a pocket-sized, waterproof carrying case.

Binoculars: Olympus 8x40 DPSI Binocular really very helpful during birding. It is not possible for me to grab my camera and hold it for a long time to observe birding activity on field. Olympus 8x40 DPSI Binocular is an excellent tool for bird watching and wildlife observations. The eyepiece lenses are coated with a material that provides UV protection to protect eyes against the sun rays.

Camera Bag: MOBIUS EYE DSLR BACKPACK Camera Bag
Battery Grip: Powerextra battery Grip with type Li-Ion EN-EL14a 1500Mah x 2 Batteries and case, AA battery case and wireless remote control.
Flash: Digitek Flash DLF-015(Universal Mount)
Memory Cards: SanDisk 90MB/s 32GB, 64GB SD Cards

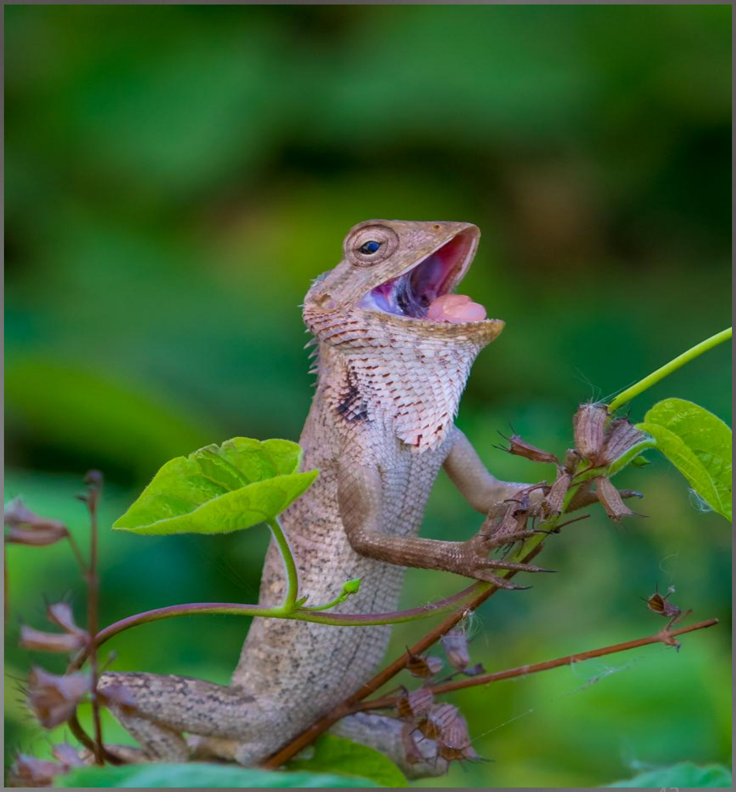
Other Accessories:

1. Nikon MH-24 Battery Charger
2. Envie AA/AAA battery charger, Pack of AA (envie rechargeable & Duracell non rechargeable batteries),
3. Basic Lens cleaning kit contains Blower, Brush and Microfiber cloth.
4. Swiss knife
5. iPhone 6 to operate SEEK Thermal lens.

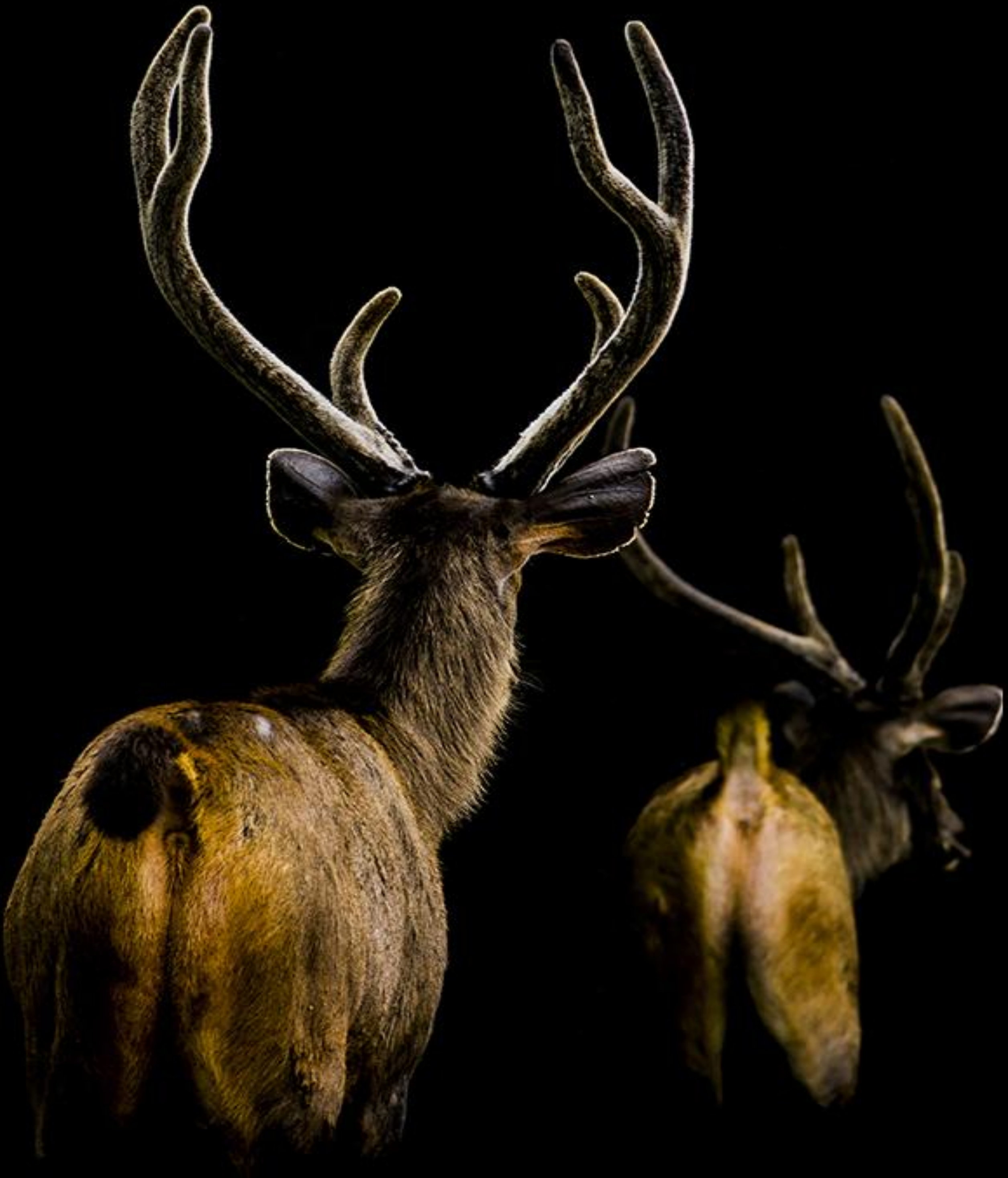
Tips and suggestions to Beginners: In my 4 years of experience what I understood is “The real camera is behind the viewfinder, that is nothing but your EYE”. So my suggestion to beginners is that “Not to worry about the gear but your command over it”.

Pick up your own style of photography and avoid mundane snaps. In the initial stages, it will be too confusing but it really brings out the uniqueness within you.

Always remember “The Murphy’s Law” which means “Anything that can go wrong will go wrong”. So before starting on a trip, double check your gear. If you forget to pack something related to your gear, it will limit your birding as well as photographic experience. For example, if you are going out for a shoot or outdoor trip and if you haven’t checked your bag thoroughly and realized that you forgot charging your battery or not carrying memory card or changing your camera settings as per the situation you will be regretting on field.

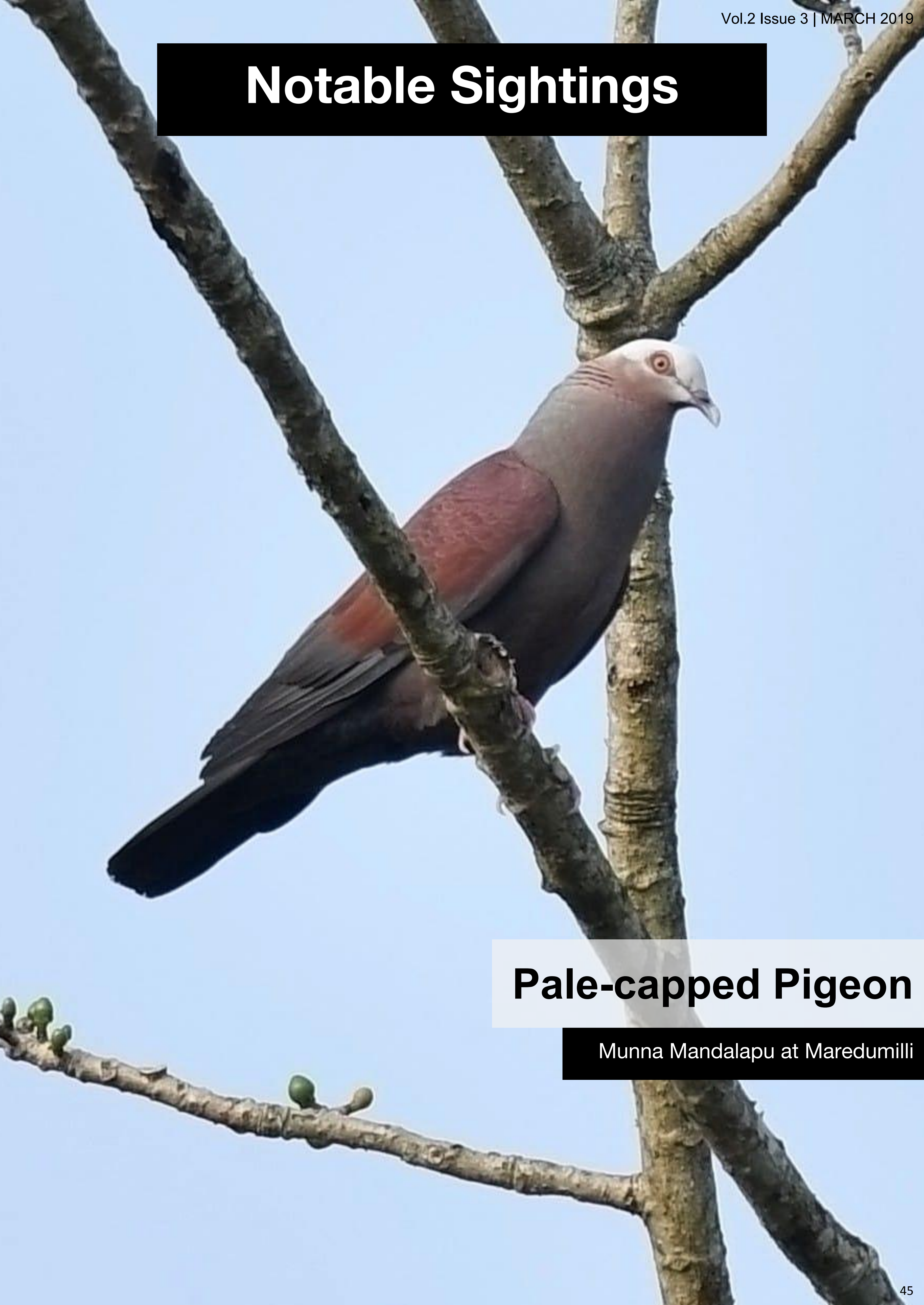


manu's captures



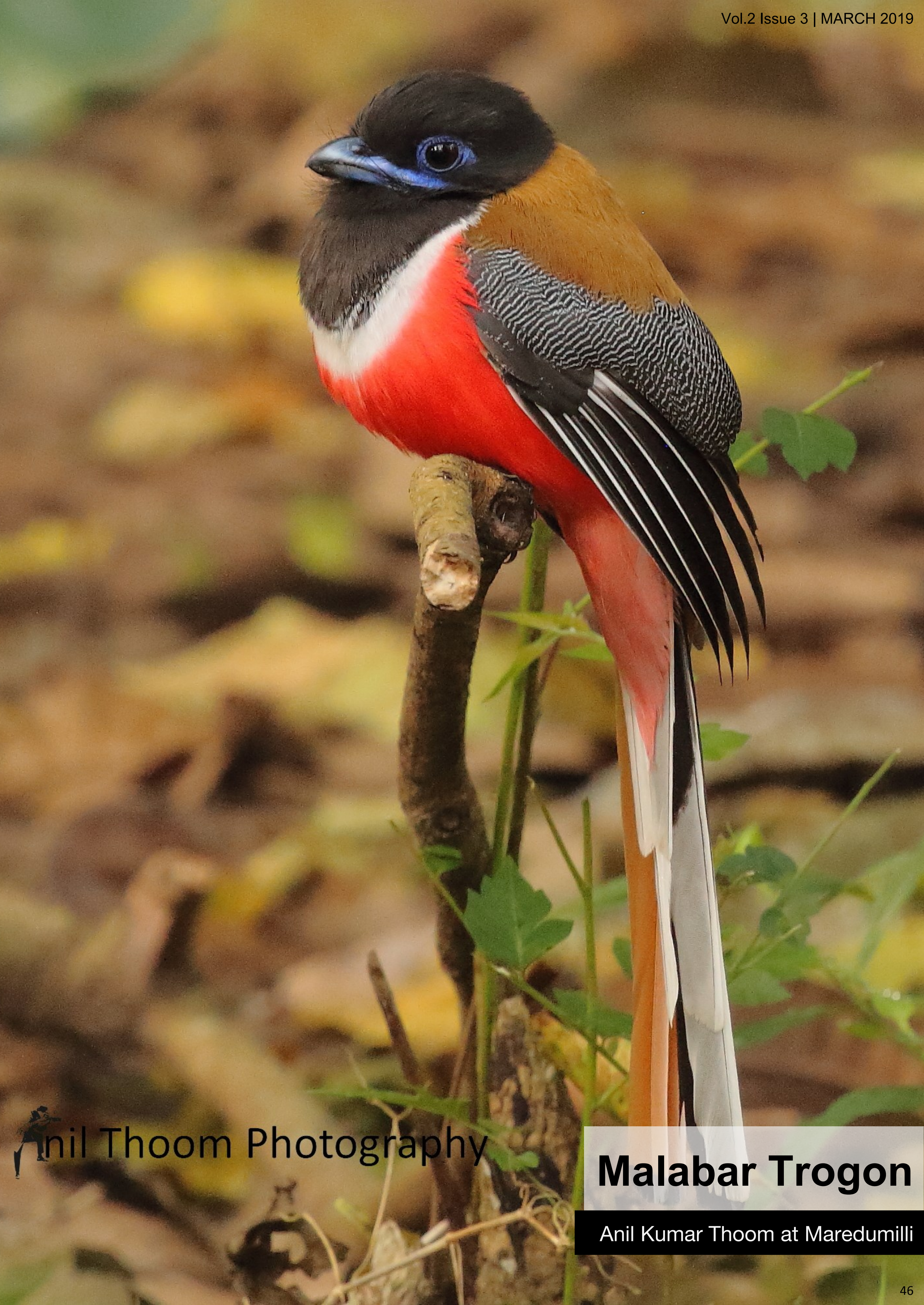
Journey into the darkness: Natgeo editor’s favourite

Notable Sightings



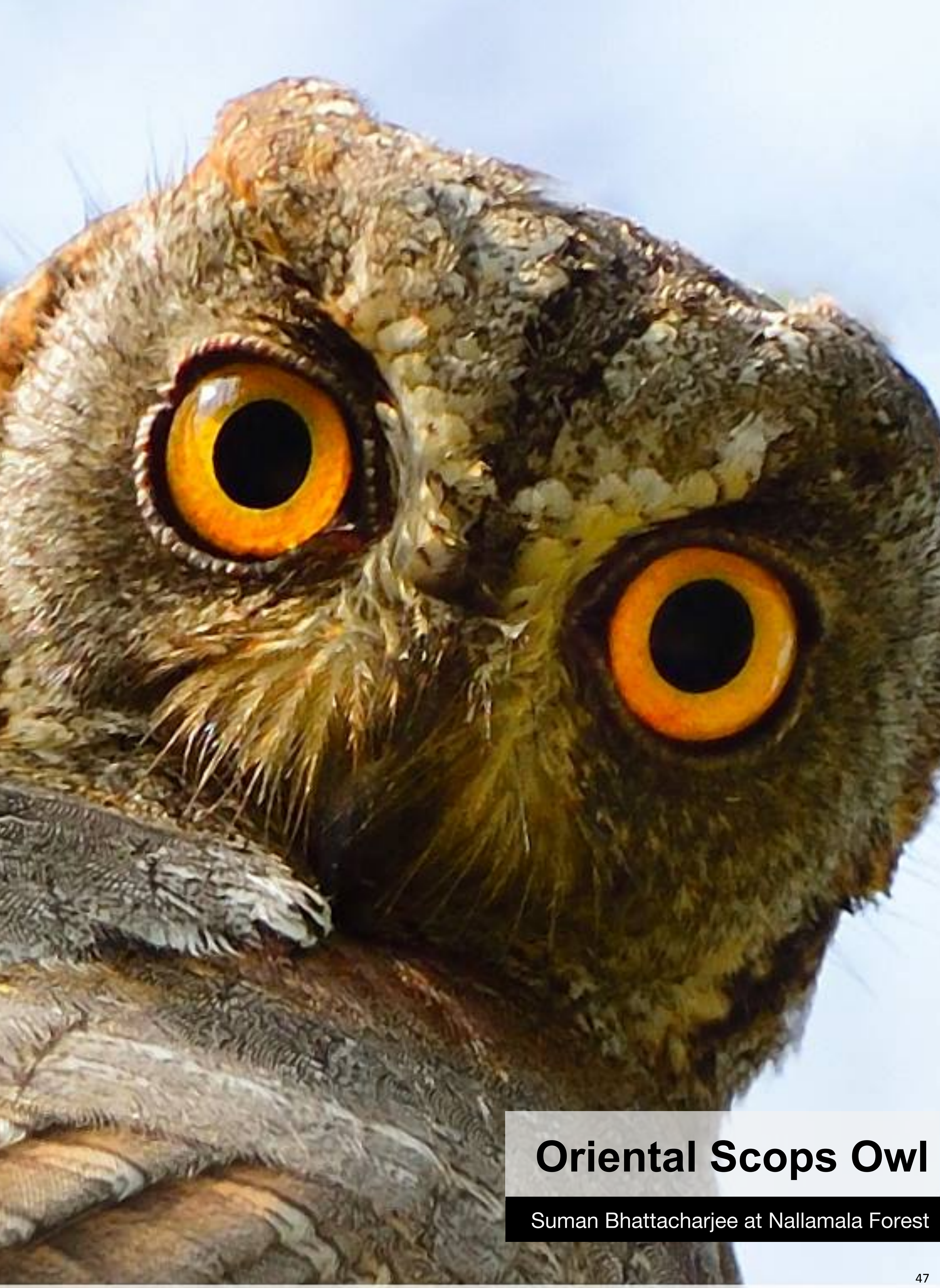
Pale-capped Pigeon

Munna Mandalapu at Maredumilli


Anil Thoom Photography

Malabar Trogon

Anil Kumar Thoom at Maredumilli

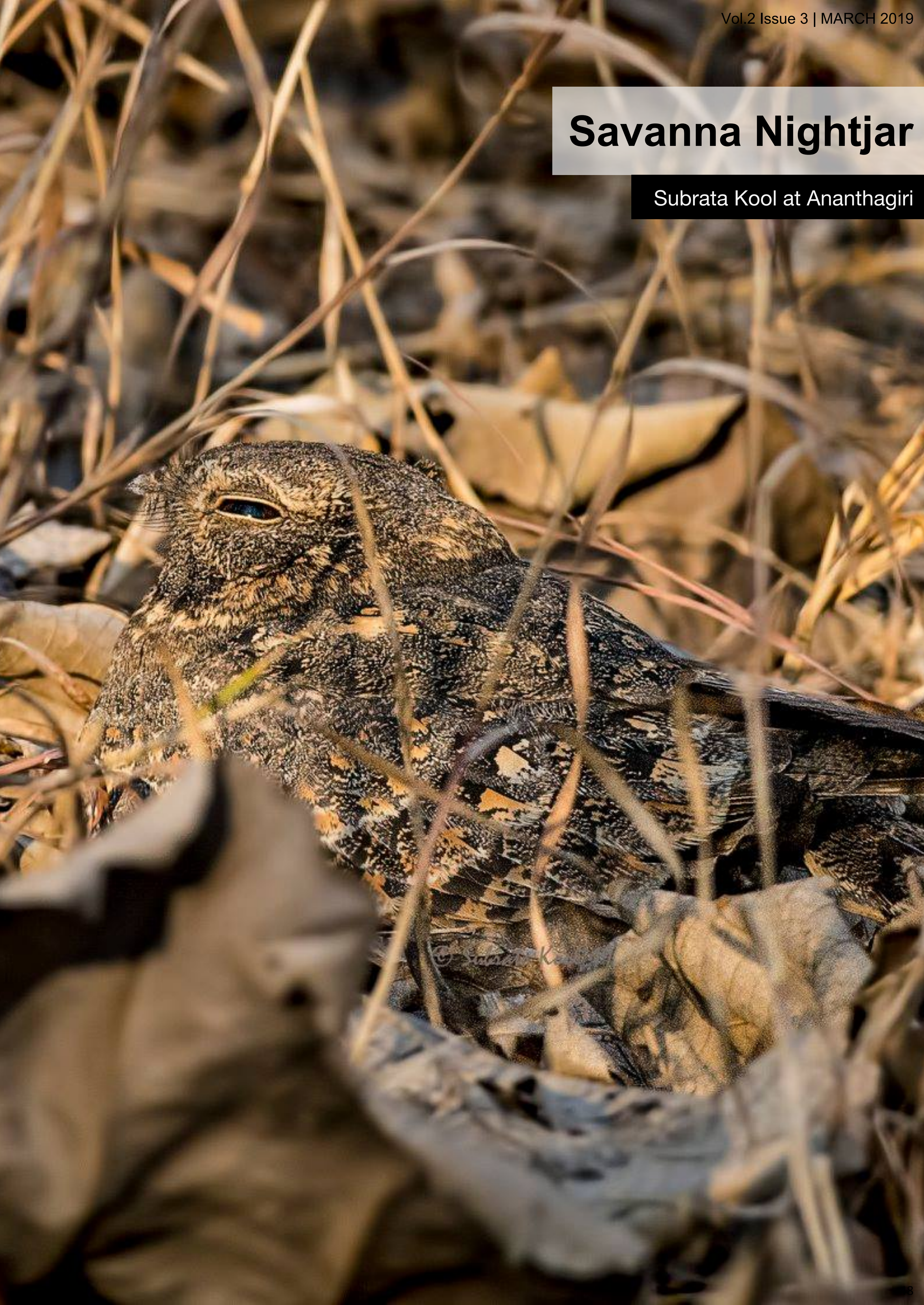


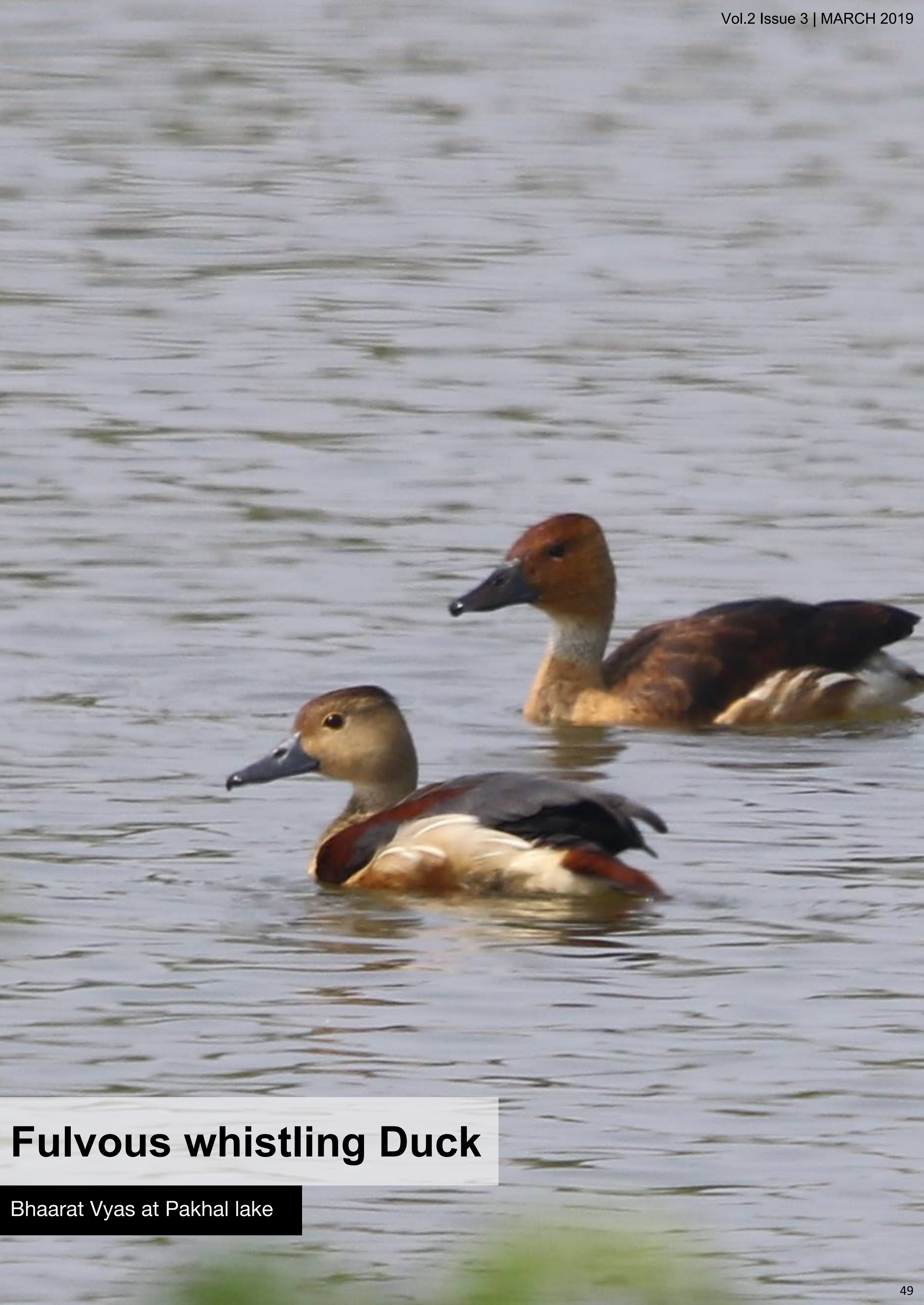
Oriental Scops Owl

Suman Bhattacharjee at Nallamala Forest

Savanna Nightjar

Subrata Kool at Ananthagiri


© Subrata Kool

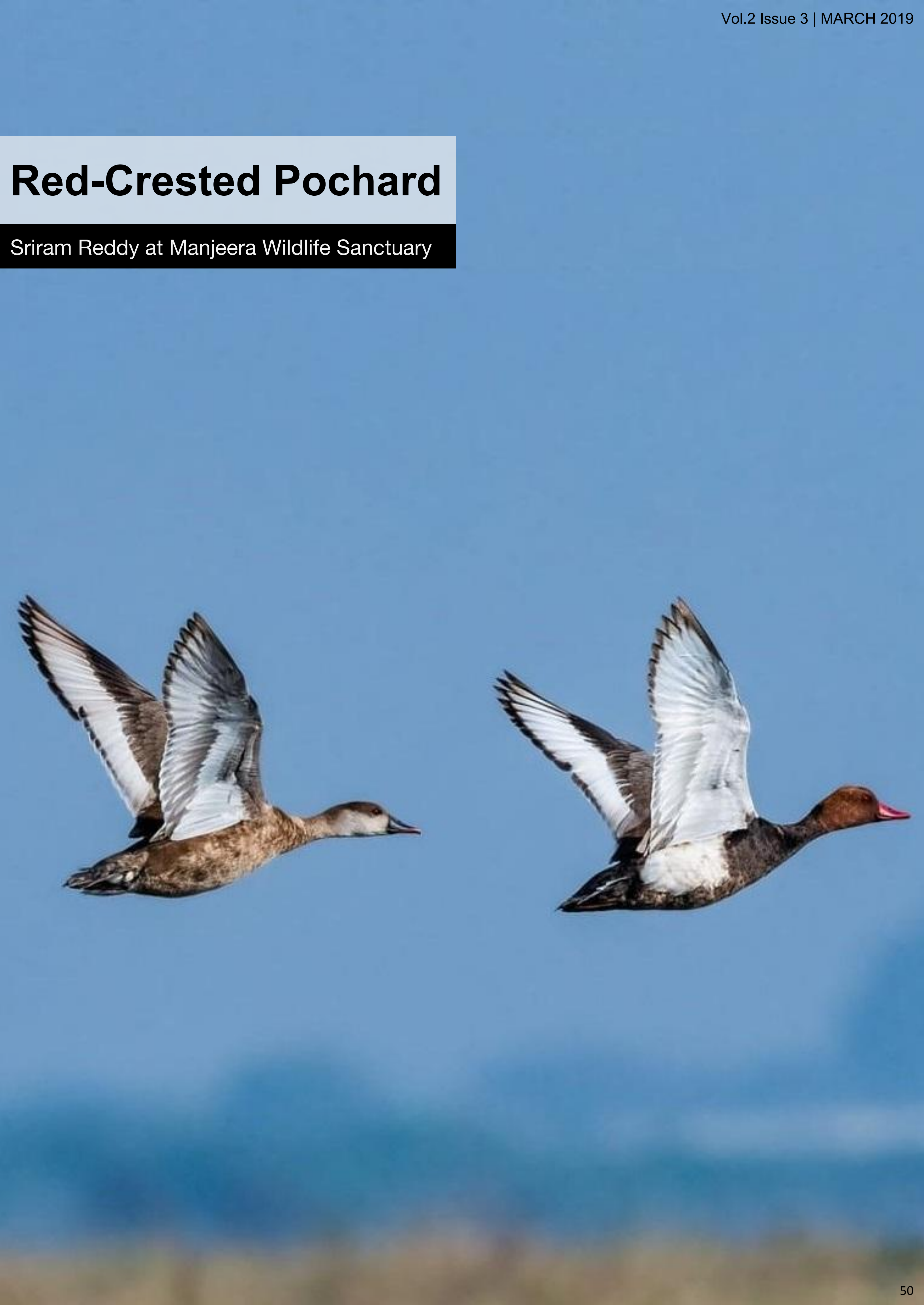


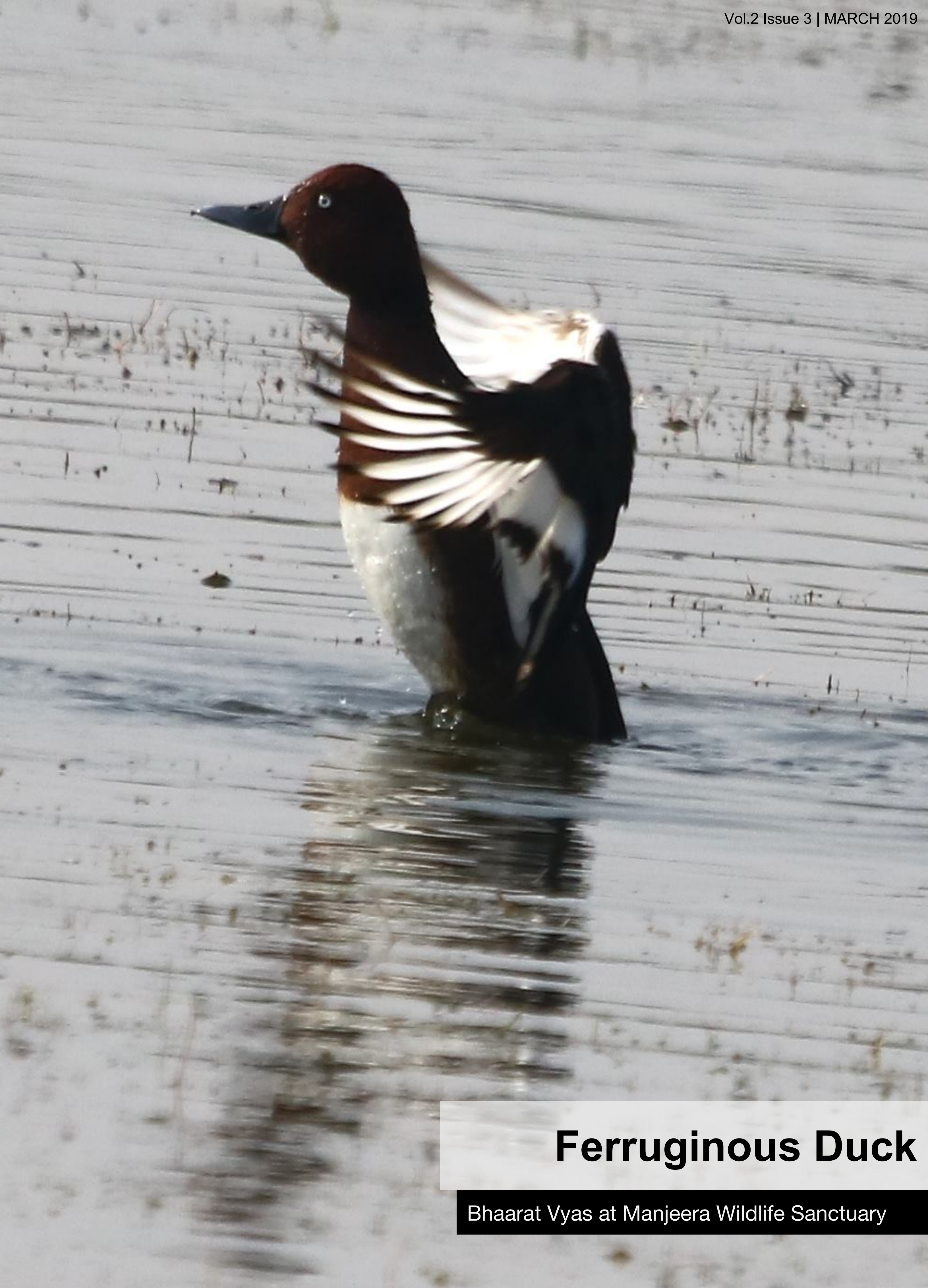
Fulvous whistling Duck

Bhaarat Vyas at Pakhal lake

Red-Crested Pochard

Sriram Reddy at Manjeera Wildlife Sanctuary



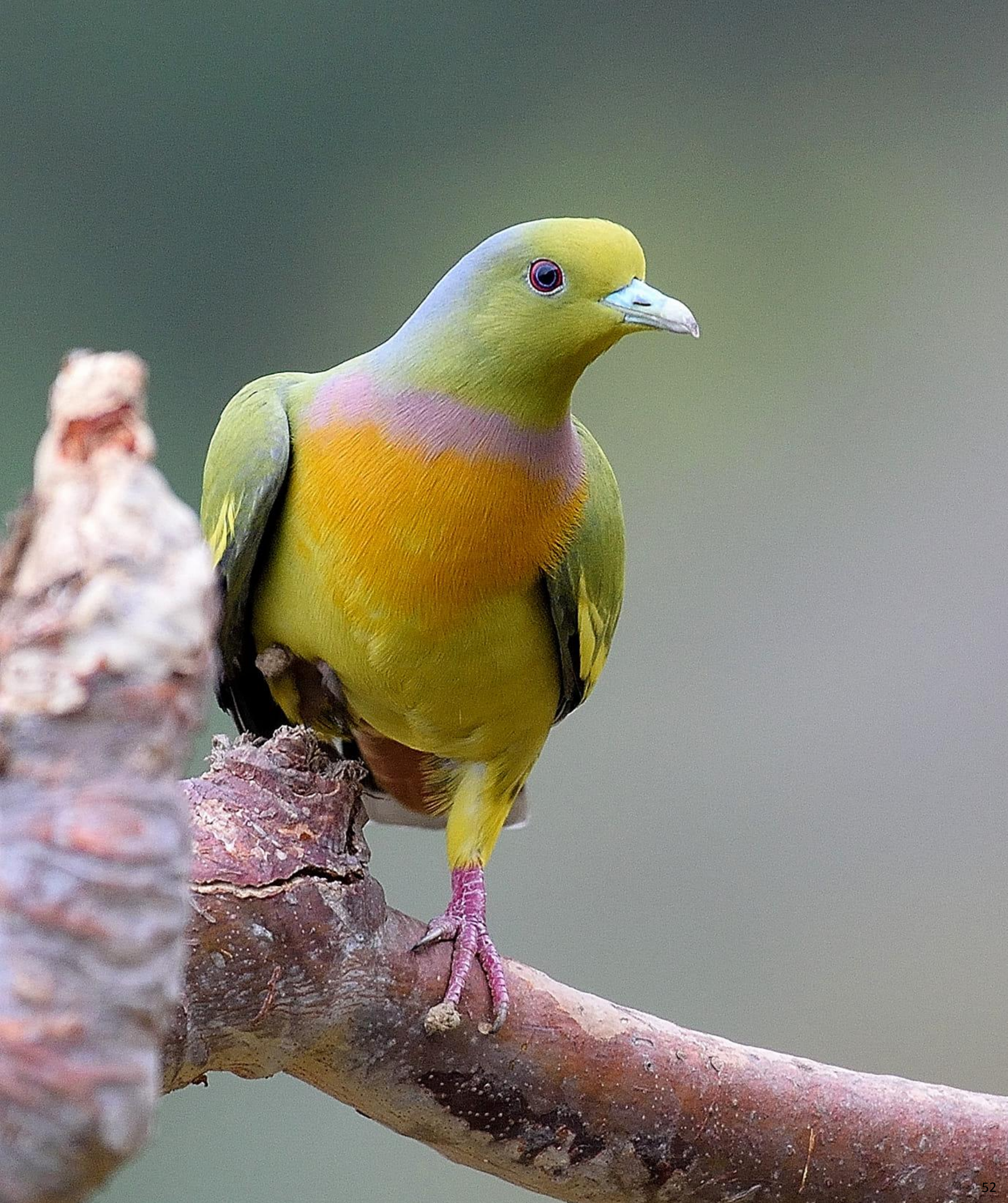


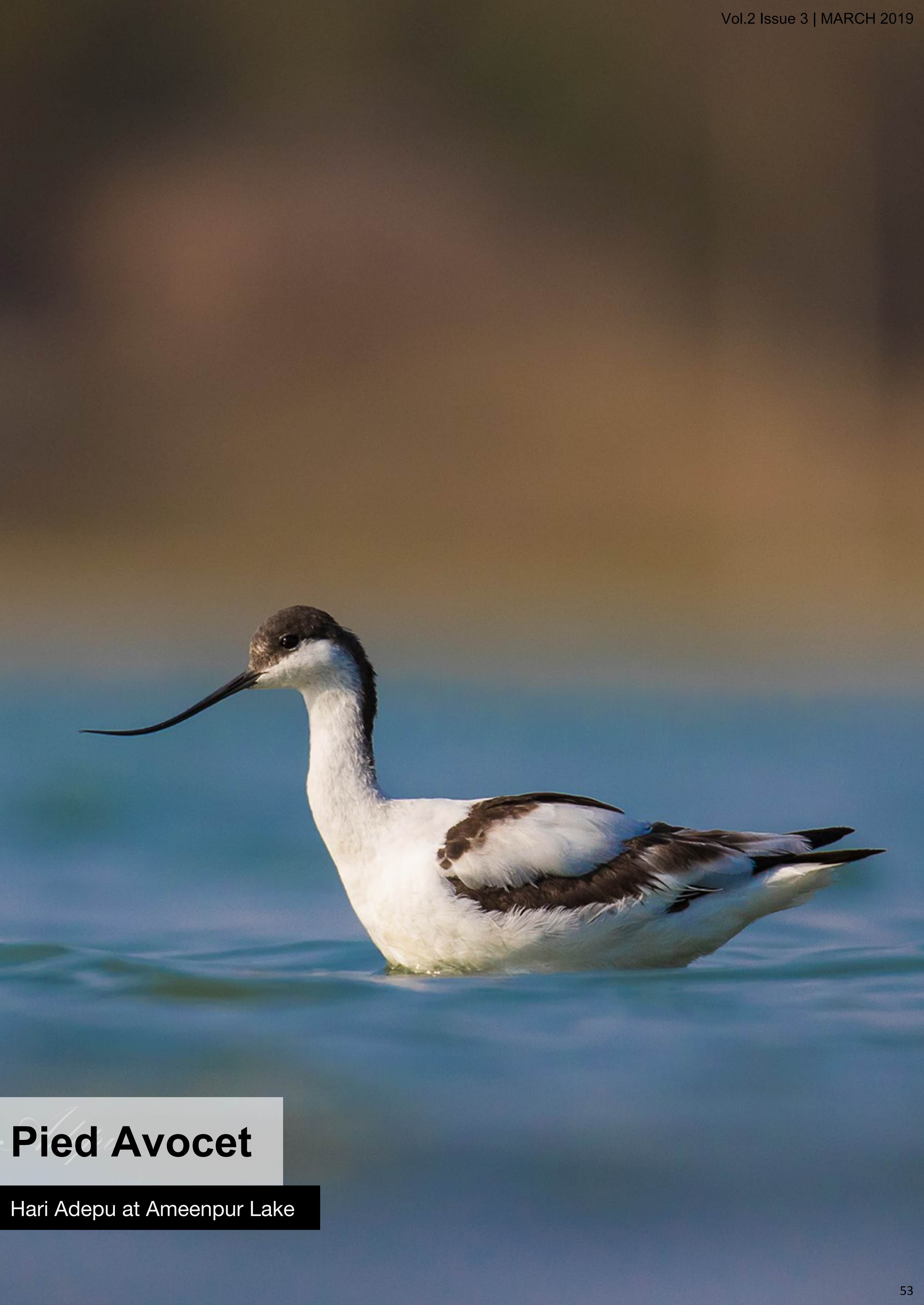
Ferruginous Duck

Bhaarat Vyas at Manjeera Wildlife Sanctuary

Orange breasted pigeon

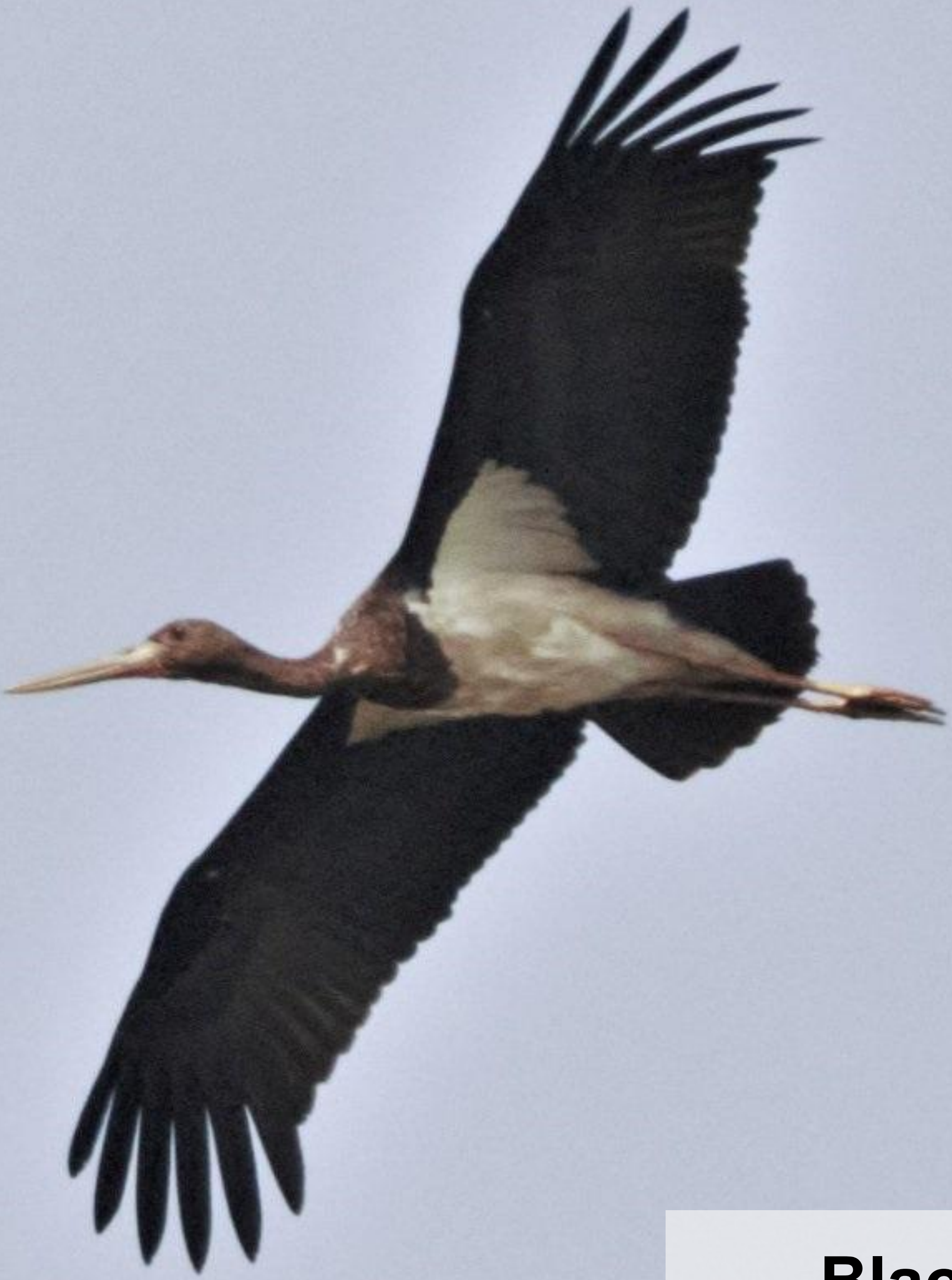
Mangeshsingh Thakur at Umamaheshwaram





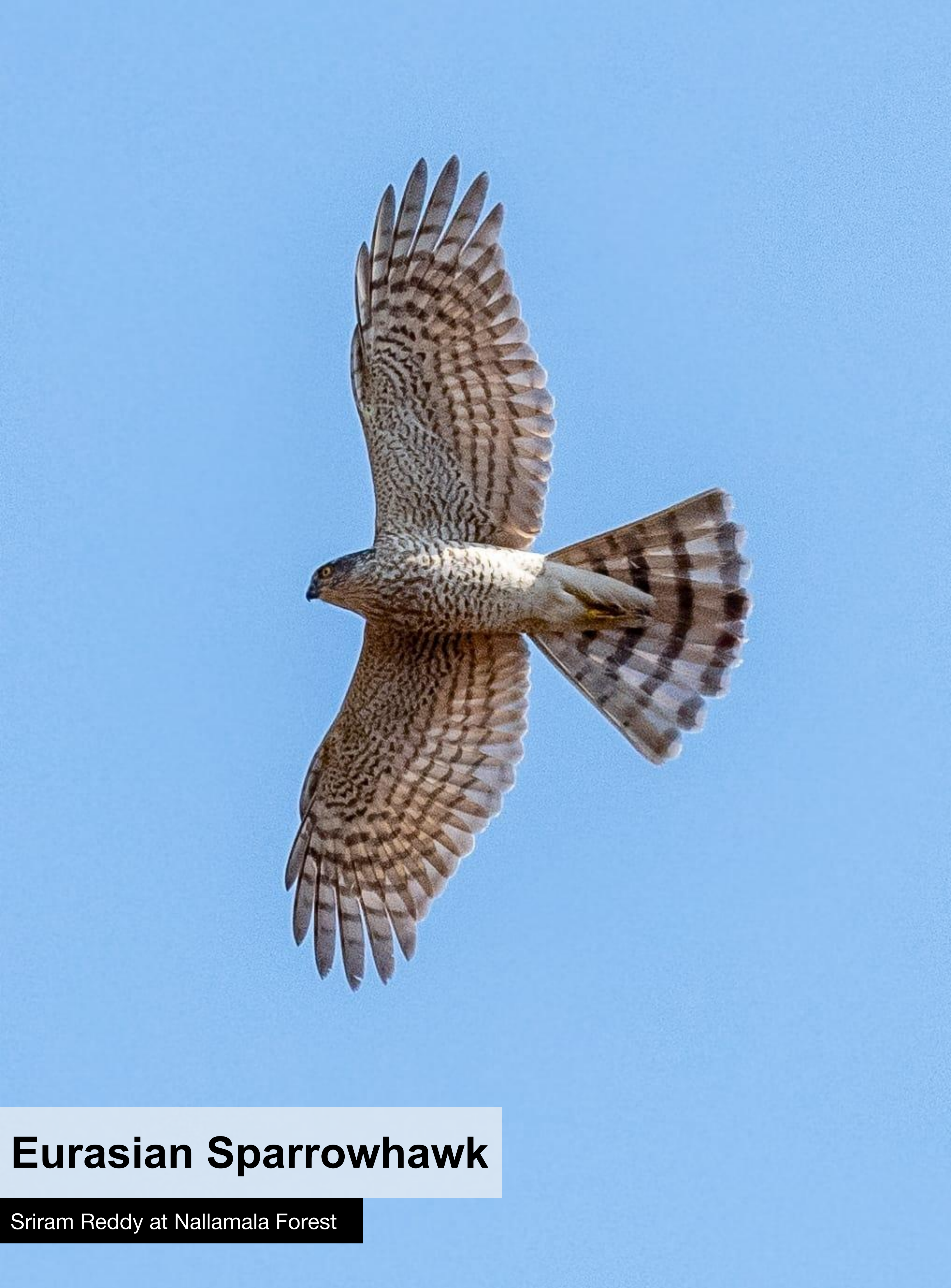
Pied Avocet

Hari Adepu at Ameenpur Lake



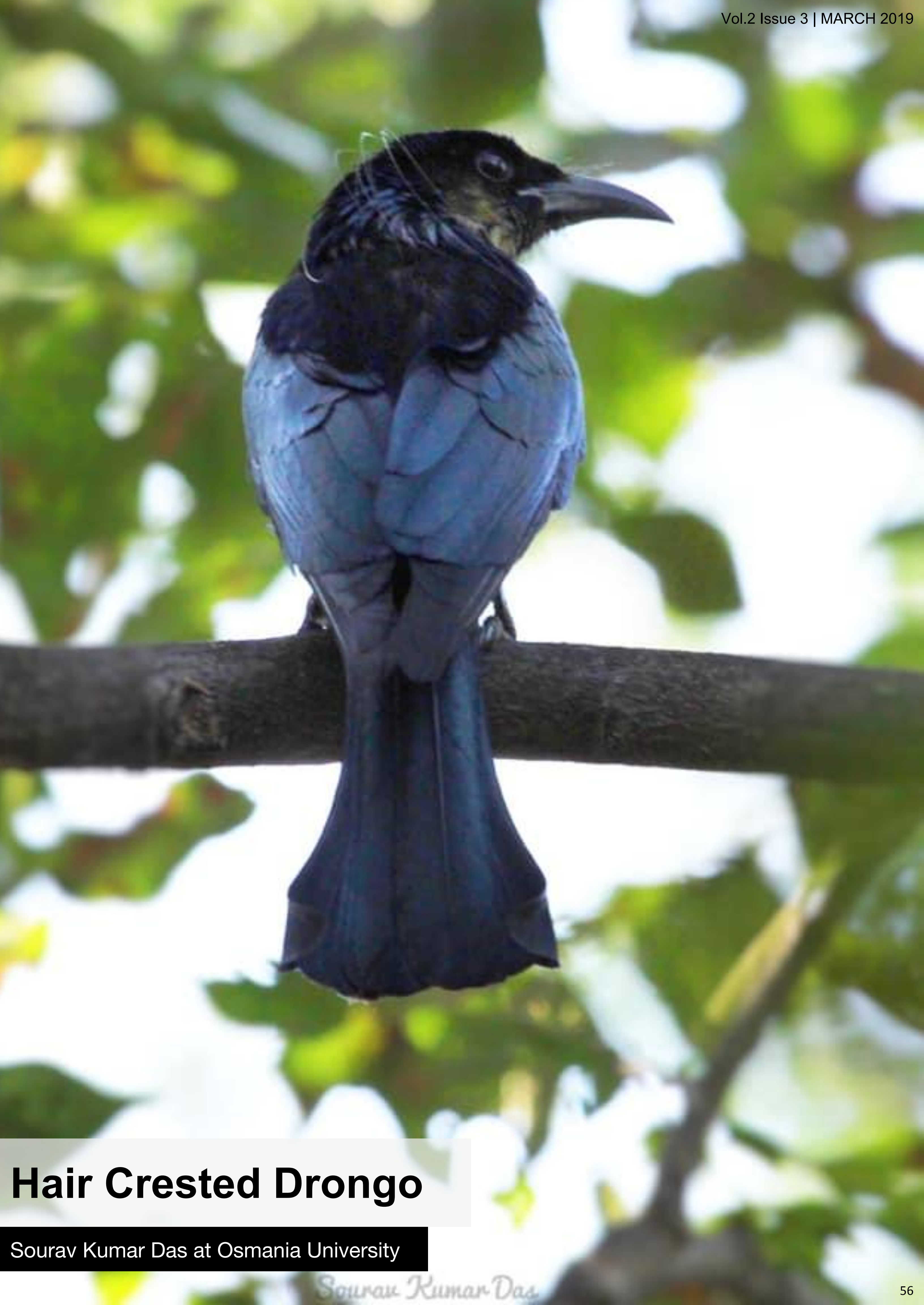
Black Stork

V Sundareswaran at Kawal



Eurasian Sparrowhawk

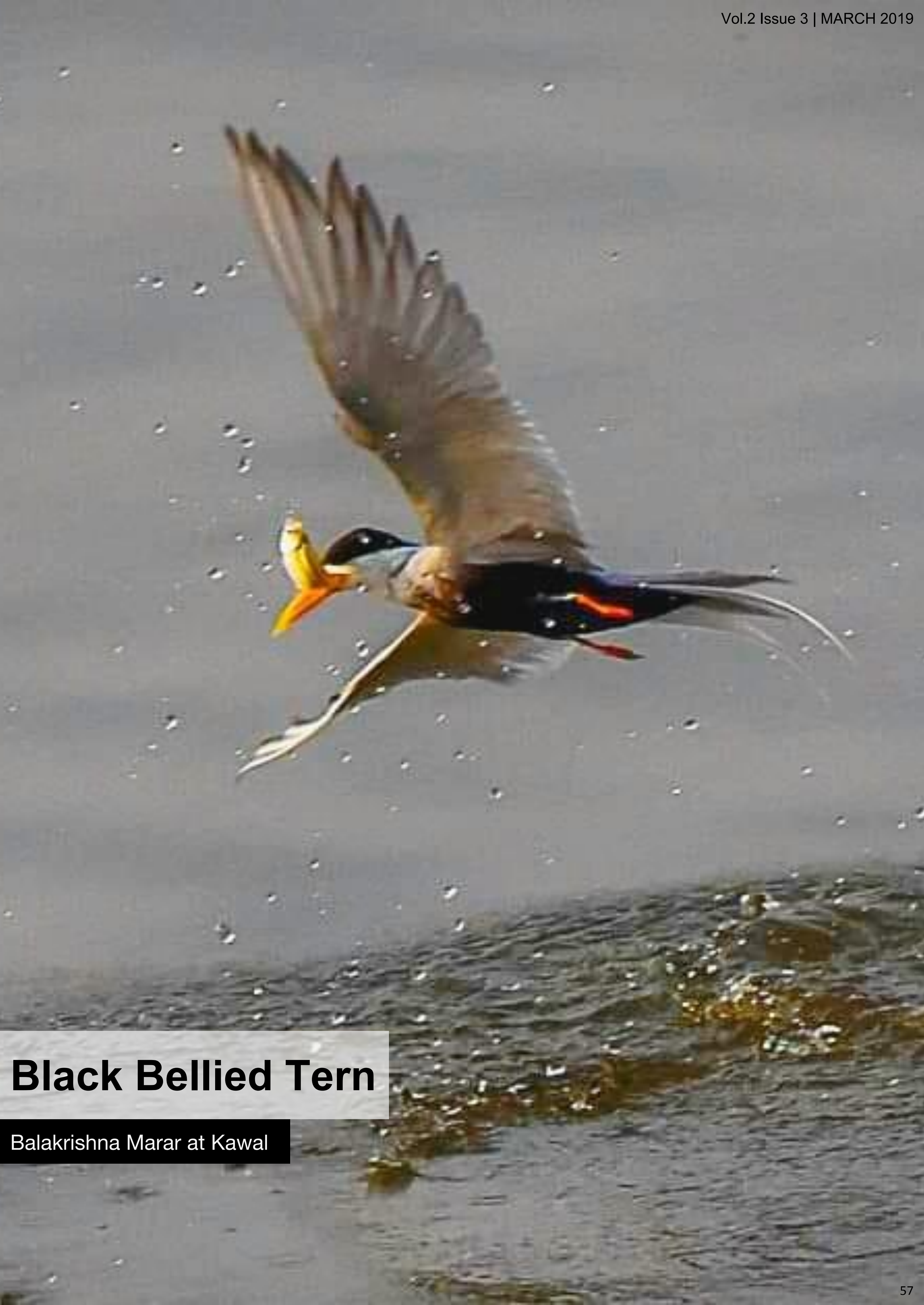
Sriram Reddy at Nallamala Forest



Hair Crested Drongo

Sourav Kumar Das at Osmania University

Sourav Kumar Das

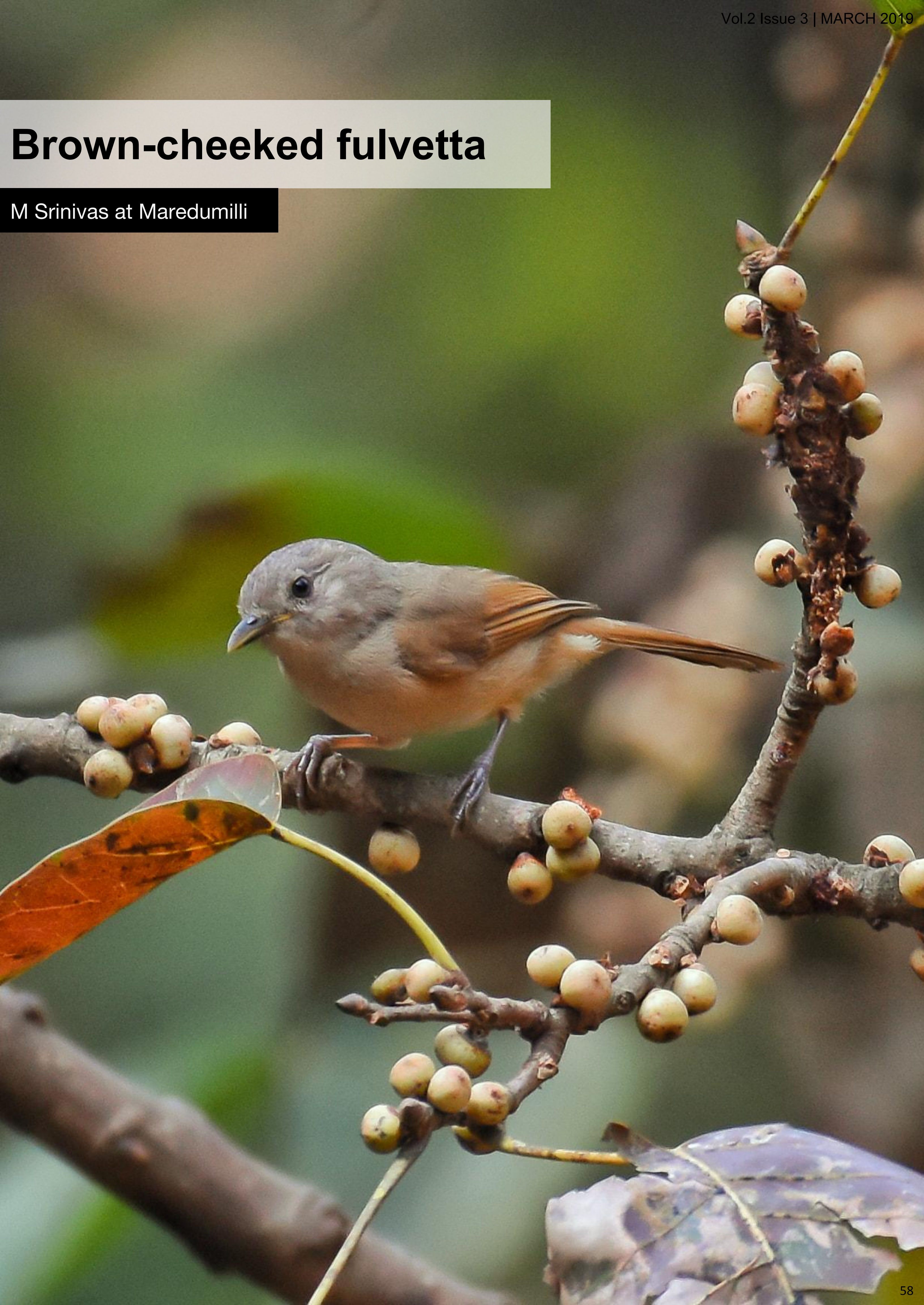


Black Bellied Tern

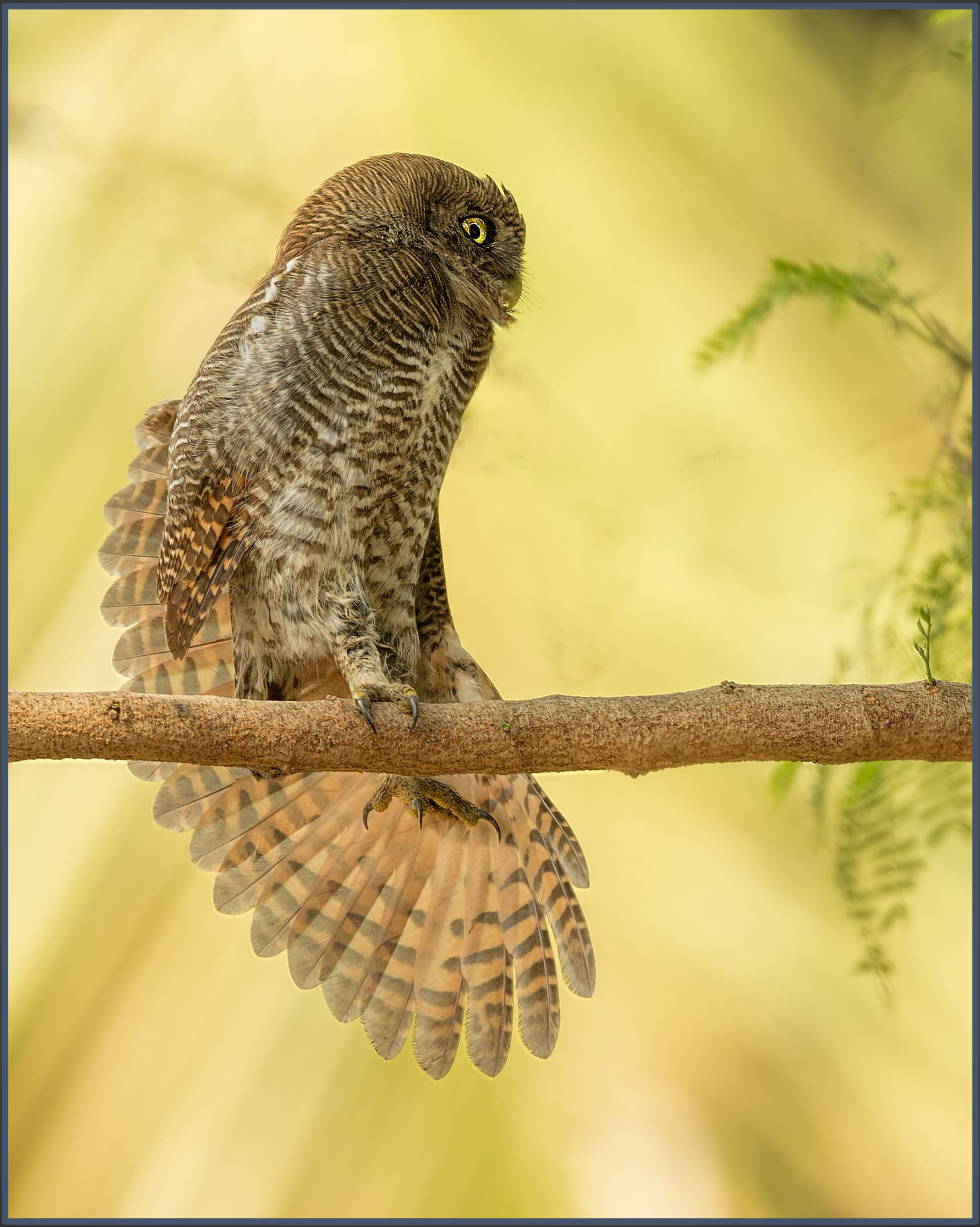
Balakrishna Marar at Kawal

Brown-cheeked fulvetta

M Srinivas at Maredumilli



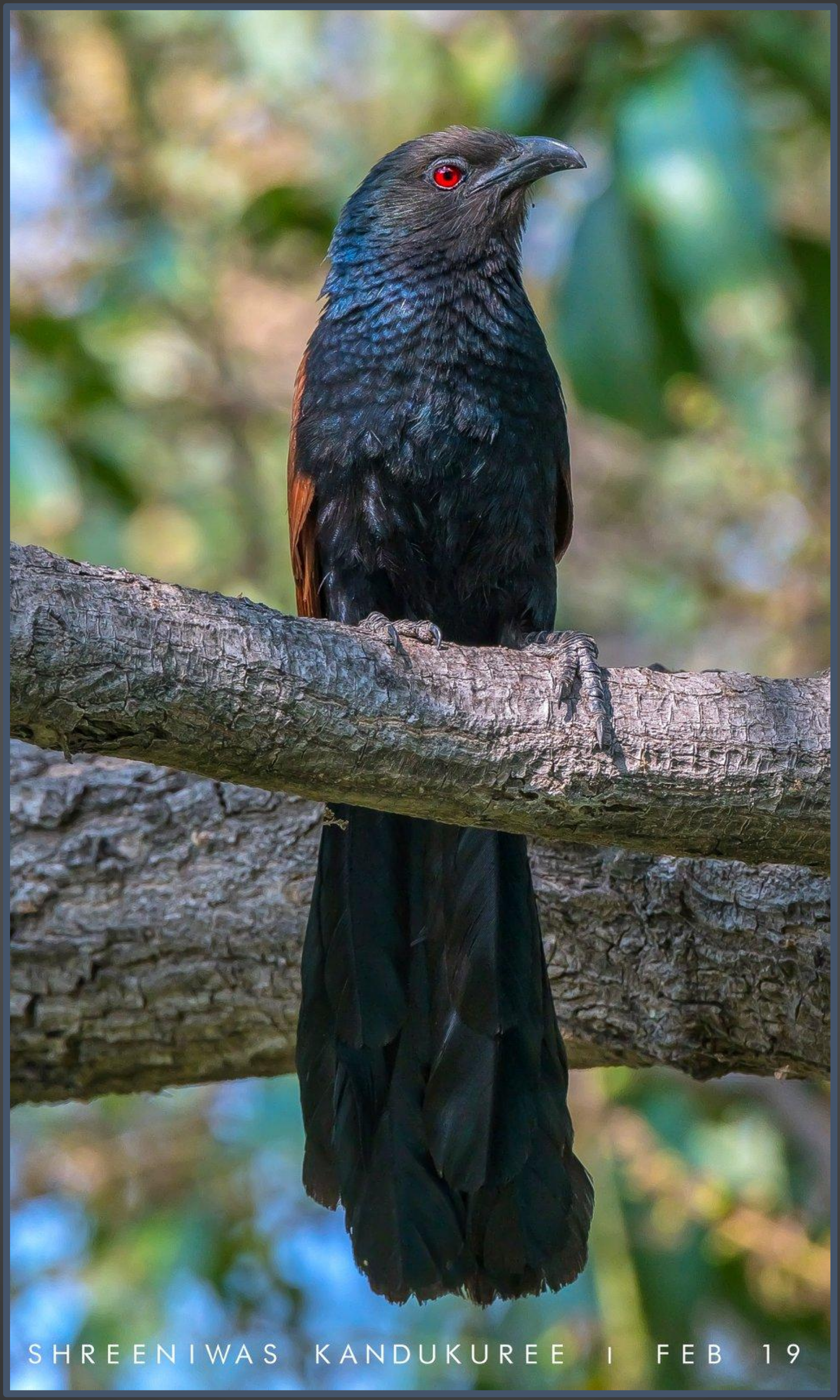
© Robin Panigrahi



Jungle Owlet (*Glaucidium radiatum*)
Ganjam - Odisha

Photographer's Corner

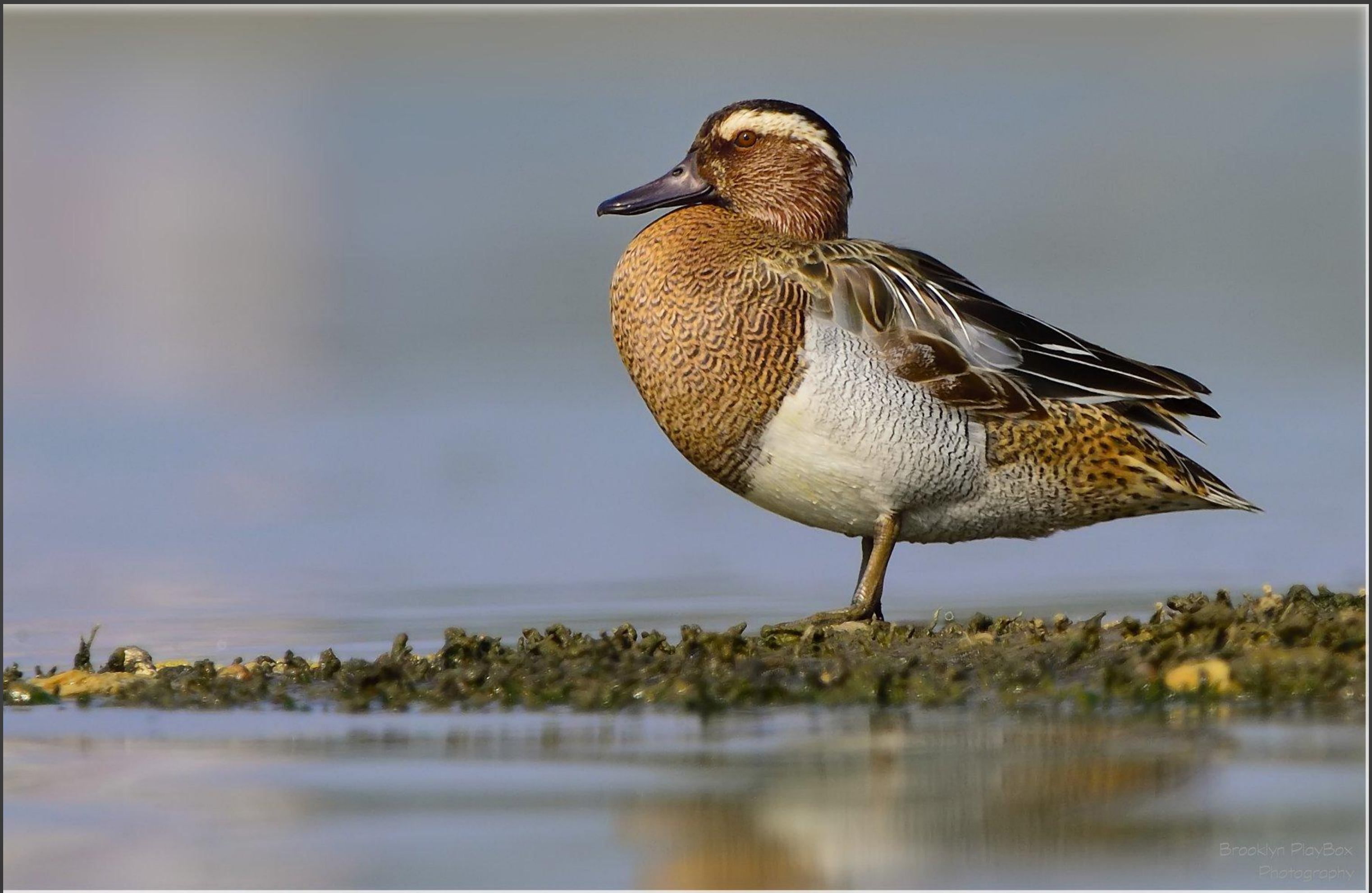
© Shreeniwas Kandukuree


SHREENIWAS KANDUKUREE I FEB 19

Greater Coucal (*Centropus Sinensis*)
Ameenpur Lake - Telangana

Photographer's Corner

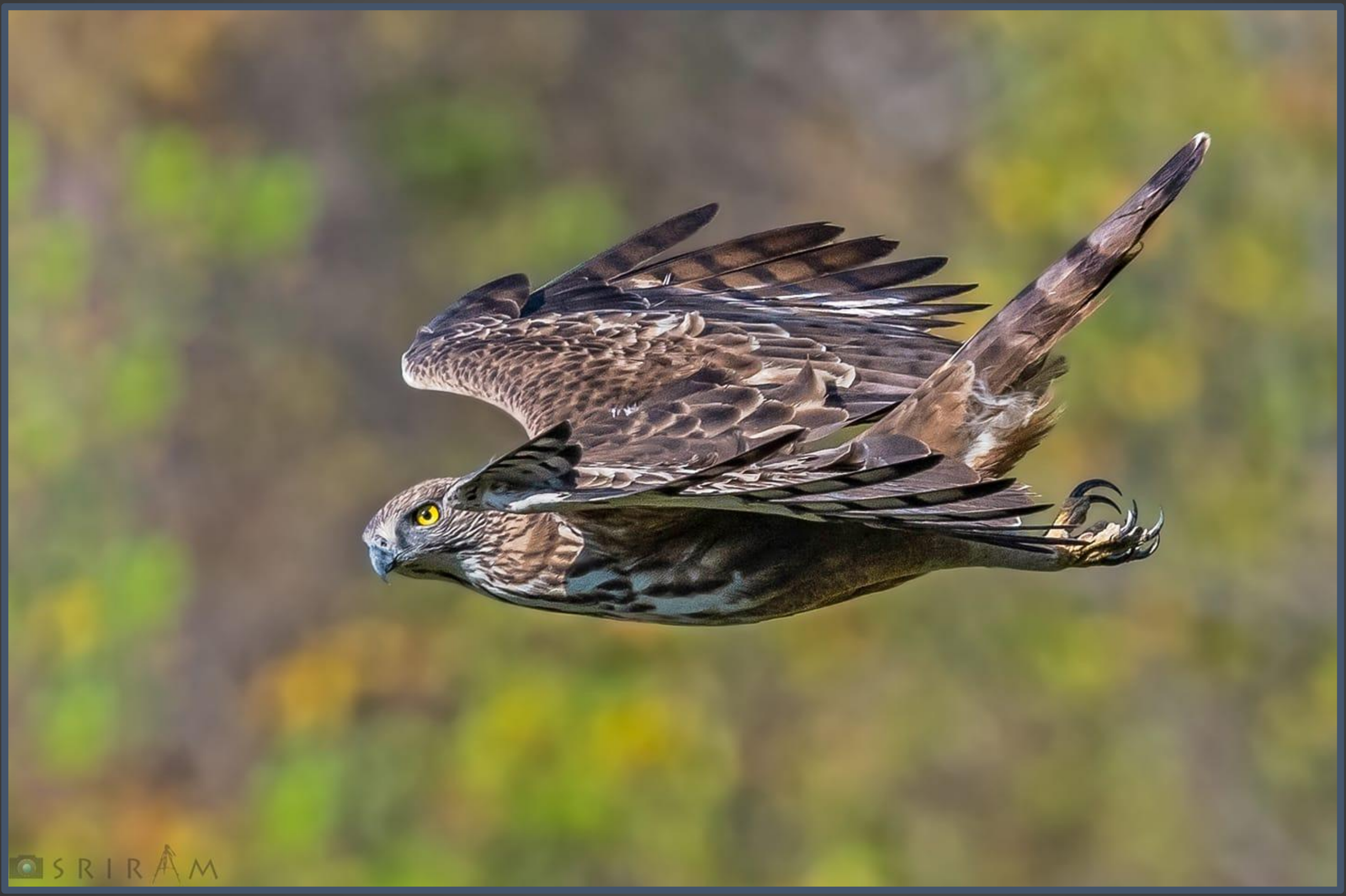
© Suman Bhattacharjee


Brooklyn PlayBox
Photography

Garganey (*Spatula Querquedula*)
Ameenpur Lake - Telangana

Photographer's Corner

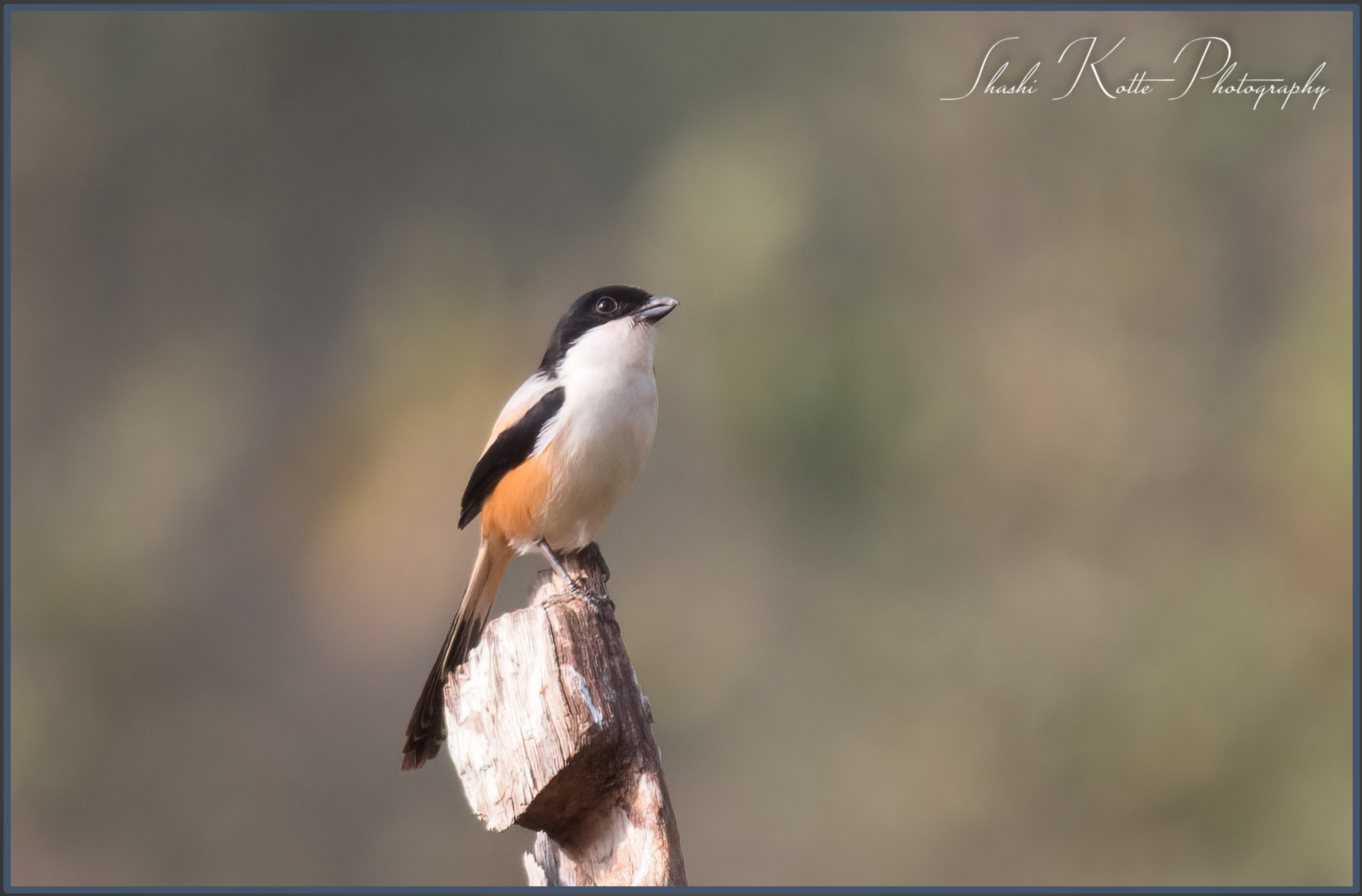
© Sriram Reddy



Crested Hawk-Eagle (*Nisaetus cirrhatus*)
Umamaheshwaram - Telangana

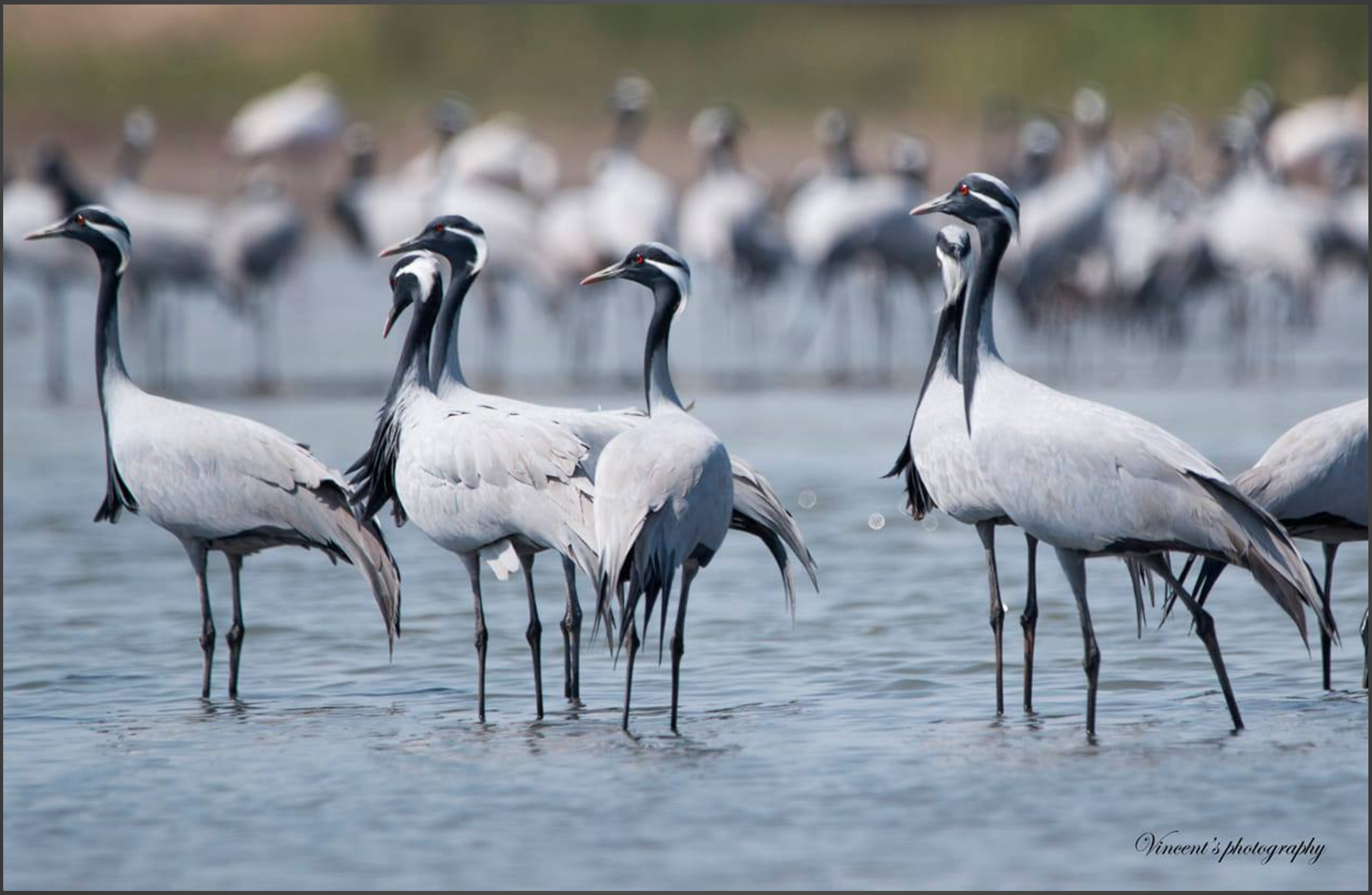
Photographer’s Corner

© Shashi Kotte


Shashi Kotte Photography

Long Tailed Shrike (*Lanius schach tricolor*)
Maredumilli - Andhra Pradesh

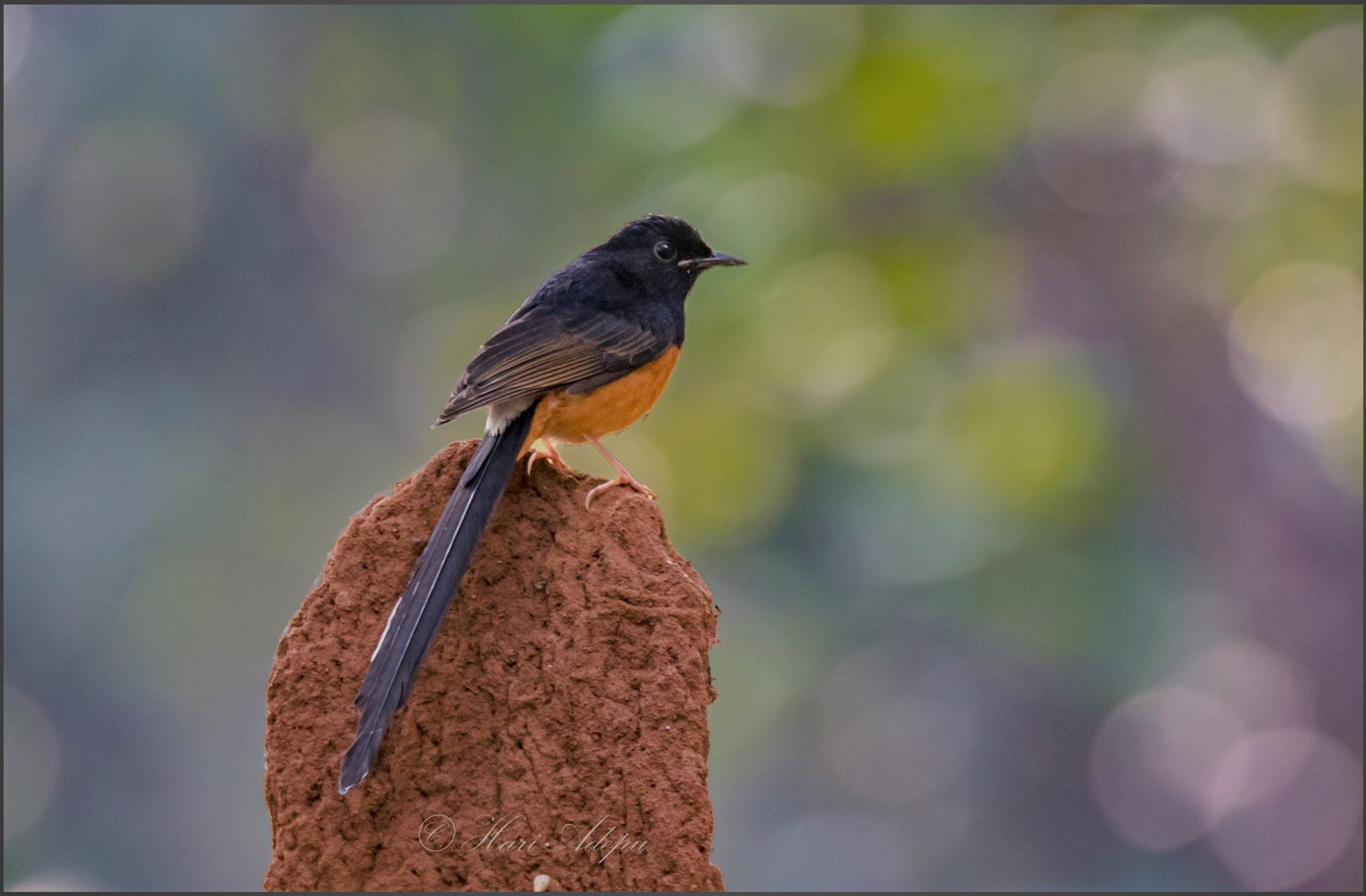
© Vincent Vinay Kumar


Vincent's photography

Demoiselle Cranes (*Grus virgo)*
Gujarat

Photographer’s Corner

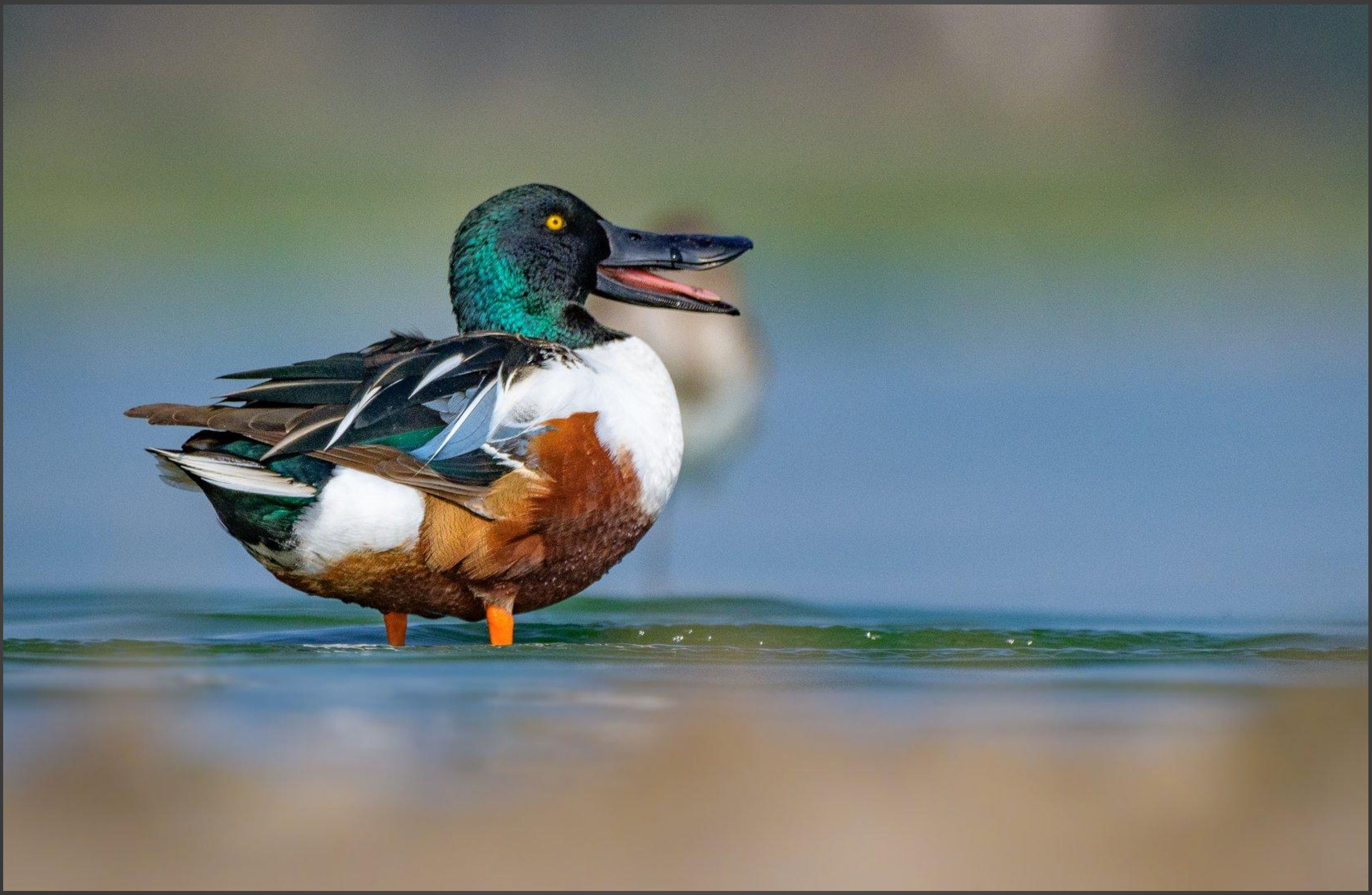
© Harikrishna Adepu



White-rumped Shama (*Copsychus malabaricus*)
Maredumilli - Andhra Pradesh

Photographer’s Corner

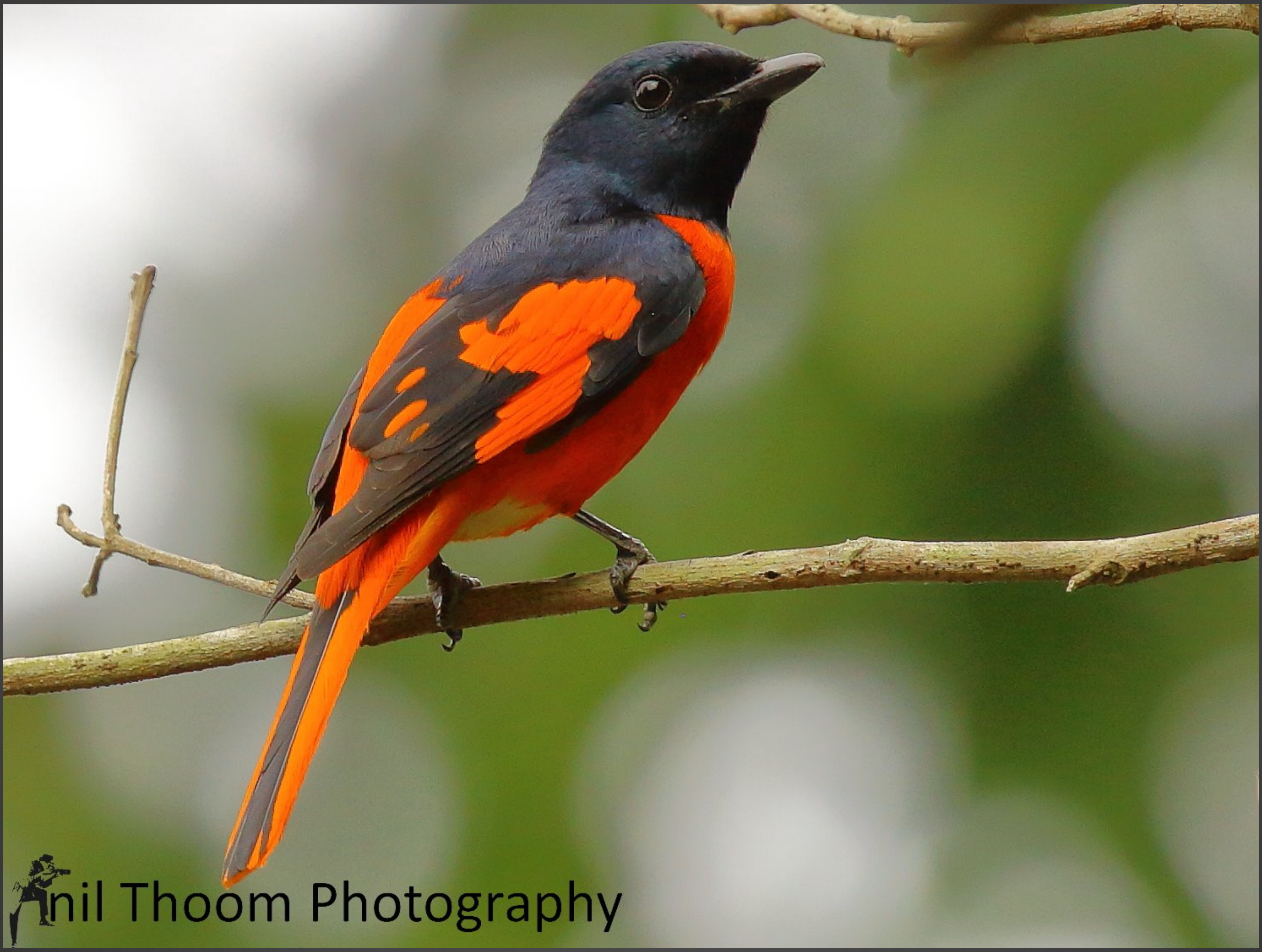
© Manjula Desai



Northern shoveler (*Spatula clypeata*)
Ameenpur Lake - Telangana

Photographer's Corner

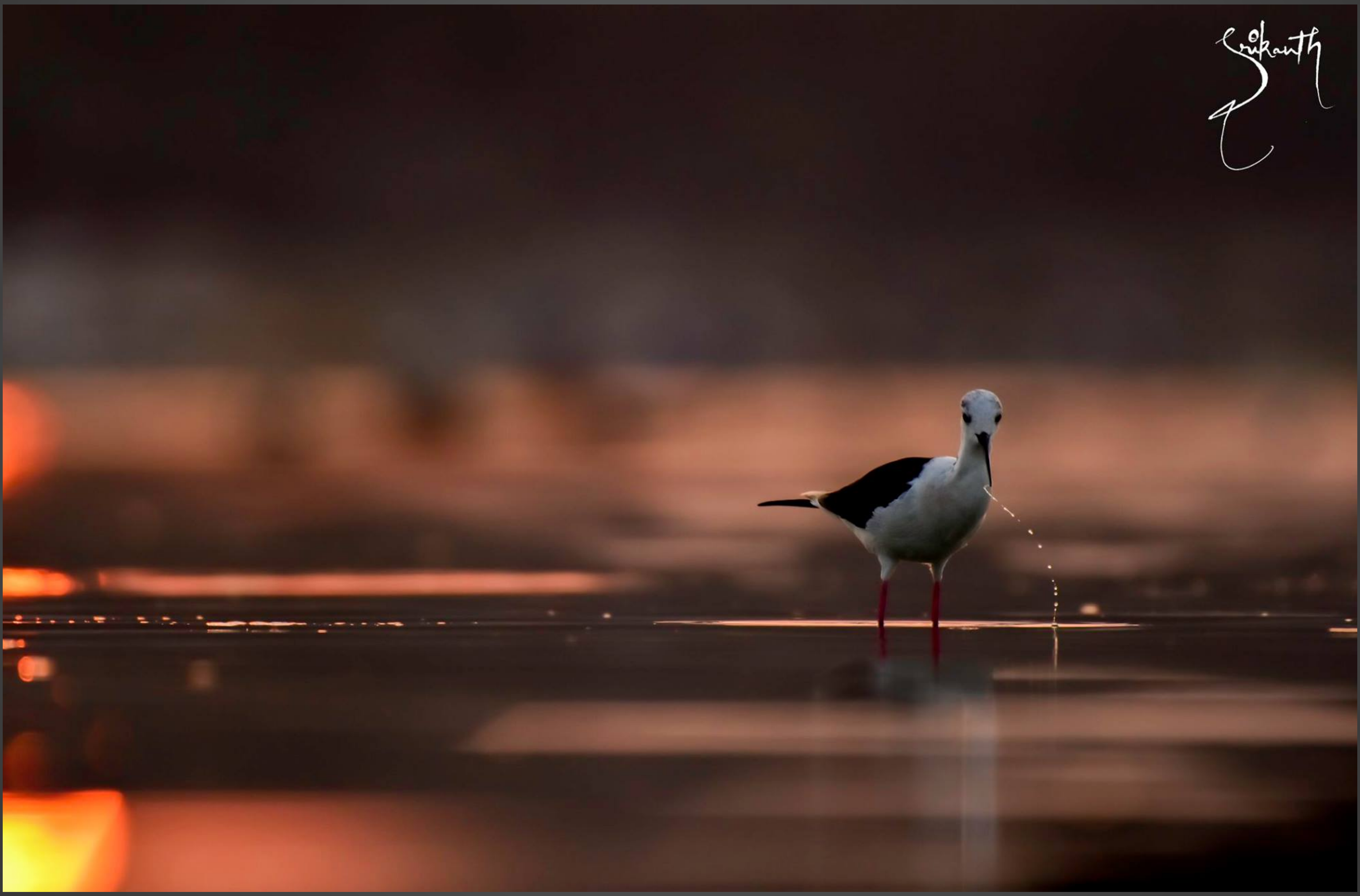
© Anil Kumar Thoom


Anil Thoom Photography

Scarlet Minivet (*Pericrocotus speciosus*)
Maredumilli - Andhra Pradesh

Photographer’s Corner

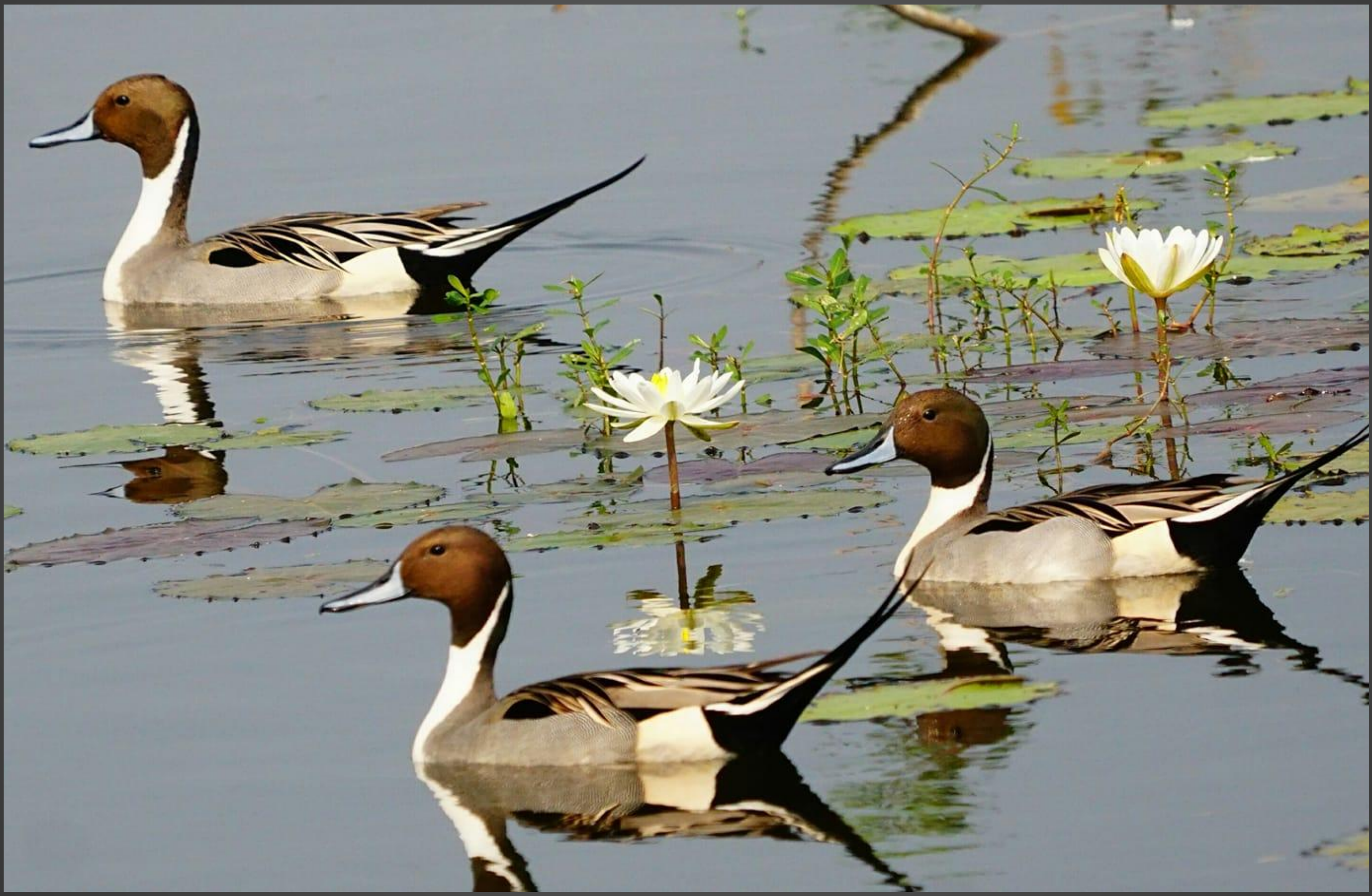
© Srikanth Soogoor



Black Winged Stilt (*Himantopus himantopus*)
Ameenpur Lake - Telangana

Photographer's Corner

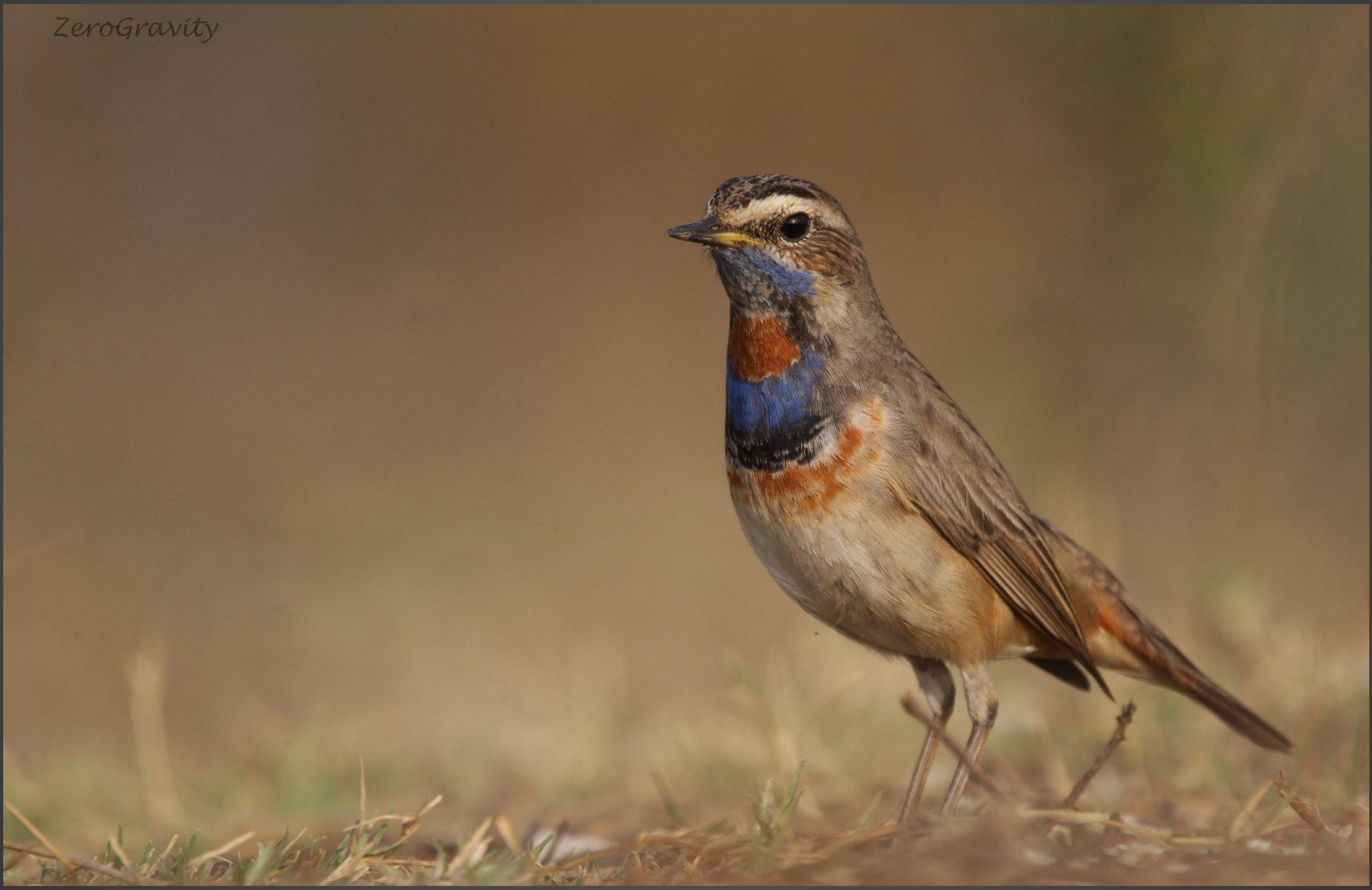
© Indaram Nageshwar Rao



Northern Pintails (Anas acuta)
Warangal - Telangana

Photographer's Corner

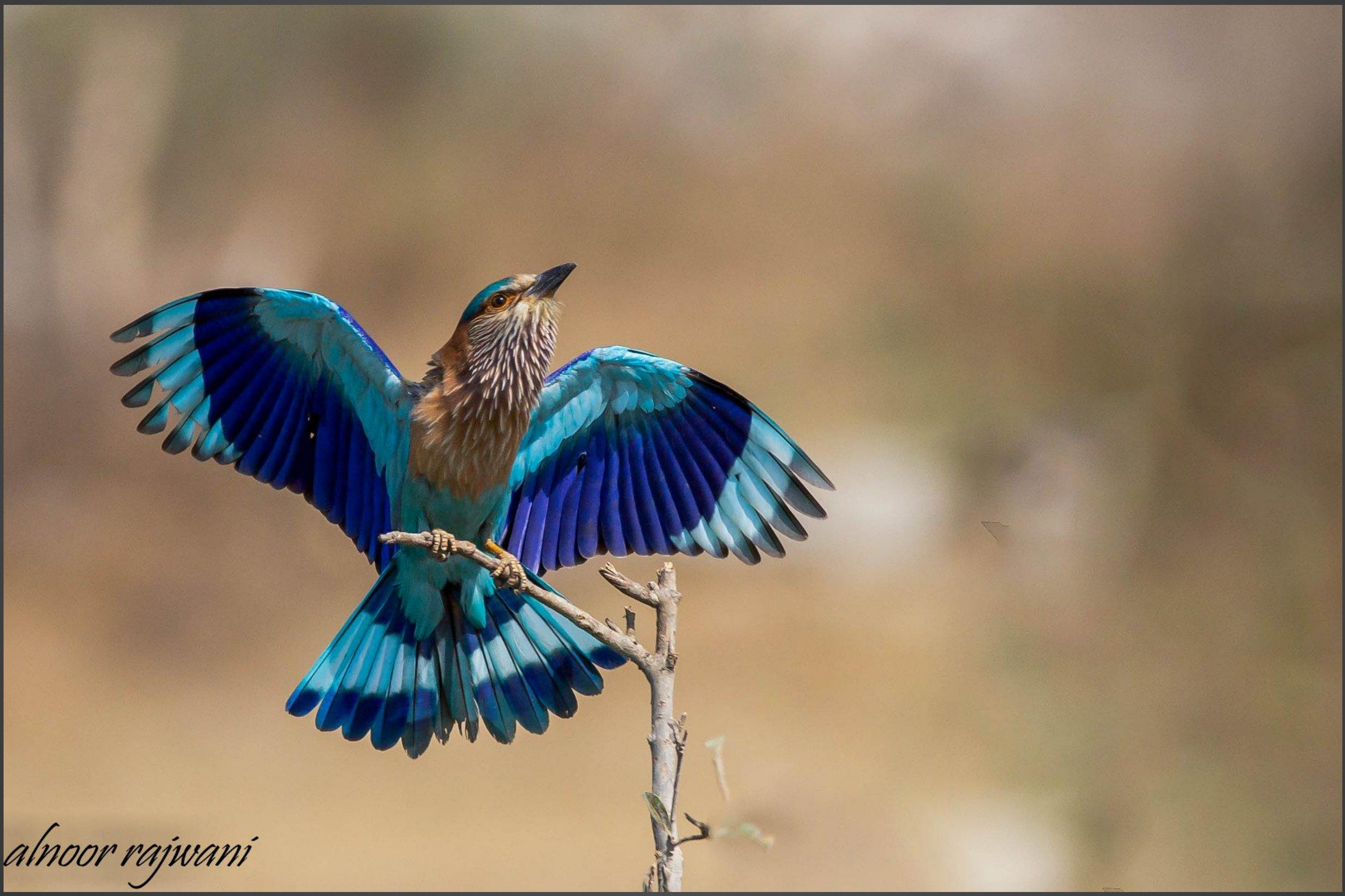
© Vyom Vyas


ZeroGravity

Bluethroat (*Luscinia svecica*)
Ameenpur Lake - Telangana

Photographer's Corner

© Alnoor Rajwani


alnoor rajwani

Indian Roller (*Coracias benghalensis*)
Ameenpur Lake - Telangana

ARANYA

Vol.2 Issue 3 | MARCH 2019

Great crested grebe
By Sriram Reddy

Hyderabad Birding Pals